

Qatar opposes Iraq, Iran isolation

DUBAI (R) — Qatar is opposed to the isolation of either Iraq or Iran and called for Iraq's return to the Arab fold, the Qatari News Agency (QNA) reported on Sunday. Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad Bin Jasssem Bin Al Thani told Doha Television on Saturday night: "Qatar does not believe in the policy aimed at shutting out Iraq or Iran," QNA reported. He was apparently referring to Washington's so-called dual containment policy to isolate both Iraq and Iran. "We disagreed with Iraq on the issue of occupying Kuwait and abiding by the resolutions of international legality... but there is a humanitarian side; and that is not accepting the degradation of the Iraqi people," the minister added. "There must be dealings with Iraq now, in a humanitarian fashion, for its return to the Arab fold and in turn the international community," said Sheikh Hamad. But similar remarks last month by United Arab Emirates Defence Minister Sheikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum were received coolly by Kuwait. He had also urged Kuwait to let bygones be bygones. The Qatari minister was full of praise for Sheikh Mohammad for "expressing what is in the hearts of most Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states."

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Qatar studies Israeli office request

DOHA (AFP) — Qatar is studying an Israeli request to open a liaison bureau in Doha, Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad Bin Jasssem Al Thani said Sunday. Sheikh Hamad also said a feasibility study was underway on the construction of a gas pipeline to provide Qatari natural gas to Israel. "Israel has asked to open an interest bureau in Qatar, which is waiting for the right moment to take a decision on this issue," Sheikh Hamad told state television here. "The Qatari government has asked an American office to carry out a feasibility study on the construction of a gas pipeline for the supply of Qatari gas to Israel," Sheikh Hamad said. Qatar has natural gas reserves estimated at 7,000 billion cubic metres, the third biggest in the world behind Russia and Iran. By choosing Qatar to provide gas Israel is looking to diversify its energy suppliers, Sheikh Hamad added. "In line with its concept of strategic security, Israel has said it would not be tied to one single energy supplier and that it would import gas from Egypt, Qatar or other parties." However, he added: "Qatar will not get involved in a project with Israel until substantial progress has been registered in the Syrian and Lebanese tracks" of the Arab-Israeli peace talks.

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Clinton vows doubled peace effort

Arab, Israeli and U.S. ministers meet in Washington

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — President Bill Clinton on Sunday opened a meeting of Israeli and Arab ministers meant to revive the troubled Middle East peace process, saying the United States would "redouble our efforts" to get it back on track. The meeting, chaired by Secretary of State Warren Christopher, brought together foreign ministers from Israel, Jordan and Egypt and a top Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) official. The peace process has been deadlocked by Israeli-PLO differences over Palestinian self-rule plans. "It is no secret to anyone in the world that we are at a critical moment in the peace process. We cannot allow the rise of terror again to threaten this peace," Mr. Clinton said. "We are prepared in this country to redouble our efforts to get the peace process back in full gear. We are doing what we can on our own and with others to deal with the problem of terror,"

he said, without elaborating. "We cannot let people believe that they can disrupt the rational, humane, decent course of history by terror," he said. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Viktor Posolavsky represented his government. U.S. Vice President Al Gore and National Security Adviser Anthony Lake also joined in the opening. Mr. Clinton hoped Sunday's meeting would establish specific steps the parties could take to keep the peace process going. He said he was willing to go to Congress for duty-free treatment of goods from industrial zones on the West Bank and Gaza if the Israelis and Palestinians agreed to set them up. "I am absolutely convinced we have to move as quickly as we can to prove that there are some economic benefits from peace," he said as the meeting opened at Blair House, an official government guest house opposite the White House. The Israel-PLO talks are

stuck over Israel's demand for a Palestinian clampdown on militant groups and Palestinian demands that Israel lift its closure of the West Bank and Gaza and stop settlement activities in those areas. Israel sealed off the areas on Jan. 22 after a suicide bomb killed 21 Israelis. Sunday's meeting brought together foreign ministers Shimon Peres of Israel, Amr Musa of Egypt, Abdul Karim Al Kabarti of Jordan and senior PLO negotiator Nabil Shaath. It follows from a Cairo summit Feb. 2 of Egyptian, Israeli, Jordanian and PLO leaders which came up with general declarations of commitment to the peace process but no new ideas for advancing it. The failure of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat to resolve the issues dividing them at a meeting last Thursday convinced the PLO of the need for U.S. intervention. The United States

apparently wanted to steer clear of contentious issues at Sunday's meeting and focus on economic and other projects that can show a common resolve to keep the peace process going. But the PLO has signalled that it intends to bring up its differences with Israel, and particularly the closure of the Israeli border with Gaza and the West Bank which has prevented tens of thousands of Palestinians from going to work. The disputes are preventing progress on the next phase of the 1993 Israel-PLO peace agreement — Palestinian elections. Despite the return of its ambassador to Washington, Syria's peace talks with Israel remained suspended. And new efforts to press Israel to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty and open its facilities to outside nuclear inspectors could also slow progress. A U.S. official who spoke on condition of anonymity, said negotiations were in "a difficult period" and told reporters at the State Depart-

ment "don't expect the meeting to suddenly transform things." Syrian Ambassador Walid Al Mouallem returned this week from Damascus after a lengthy absence, but he has not rescheduled talks with Israeli Ambassador Itamar Rabinovich that were suspended in December. Their quiet meetings in Washington were the only active contacts between Syria and Israel, which have been sparring for more than three years over peace terms and the future of the Golan Heights, a strategic border enclave. Jordan, which signed a peace treaty with Israel last year, held out hope for a successful ministerial meeting. "We will try to accomplish as much as possible on security and other obstacles," Ambassador Faysel Tarawneh said in an interview Friday. "Jordan, with Egypt, is in a good position to mediate. We have good relations both with Israel and the PLO."



American Jewish Committee President Robert Rifkind on Sunday presents a photograph representing peace to His Majesty King Hussein (Petra photo)

King: Jordan will set model for coexistence

American Jewish Committee ready to help Jordan consolidate peace

Special to the Jordan Times
AMMAN — His Majesty King Hussein on Sunday reaffirmed Jordan's commitment to not only consolidating peace with Israel but also to work in close cooperation with the Jewish state and provide an example of peaceful coexistence in the Middle East.

The King, addressing an 82-member delegation of the American Jewish Committee, also said that the majority of Jordanians supported the Oct. 26 peace treaty with Israel and the overall Arab-Israeli peace process, but that there were also forces seeking to wreck peace. The King said Jordan and Israel were "looking at all possibilities of joint ventures of economic cooperation of the resources available to us, mineral resources, of the land, of how to turn the Jordan Rift Valley into the valley of peace and into a green valley before too long."

King Hussein reiterated his willingness to use Jordan's new-found relations with Israel to advance peace negotiations with Syria and Lebanon. "Thanking the King for his warm welcome, the head of the delegation, President of the American Jewish Committee Robert Rifkind, expressed his organization's strong interest in the future of peace in the region and his hopes that other parties to the peace process would soon follow Jordan's example. Mr. Rifkind invited suggestions from Jordan on how Americans in general, and members of the Jewish Committee in particular, could help to strengthen the peace process. Mr. Rifkind expressed concern that religious fundamentalists could torpedo the U.S.-backed peace process that began in 1991. "We're concerned in the

(Continued on page 7)

Egypt tightens union elections

CAIRO (R) — Egypt's parliament on Sunday passed legislation to tighten up supervision of union elections, ignoring protests from Islamist-dominated unions of government meddling in their affairs. The bill, adding clauses to a law passed in 1993, gives the judiciary the power to control every aspect of elections to the unions. It will be presented to President Hosni Mubarak for formal ratification. Hundreds of union members controlled by Egypt's largest political Islamic group, the Muslim Brotherhood, protested on Saturday against the changes, which they fear the government will use to drive them out of the unions.

Bomb goes off in Iranian mosque

NICOSIA (R) — A bomb went off in a mosque in a suburb east of Tehran on Saturday night, shattering windows and sending people from nearby houses rushing outside, the Iranian news agency IRNA said. There were no casualties. IRNA said the bomb was planted in a library staircase of the Al Nabi mosque in Narmak, east of Tehran. Police told IRNA a person accused of planting the device was arrested.

20 killed in one day in Algeria

ALGIERS (AFP) — Algerian government forces killed 20 armed fundamentalists Saturday in a number of operations across the country, security forces said Sunday. They included an incident at Kheissba, near the western town of Mascara, in which 10 Islamic militants died, making it the largest single operation by security forces since the start of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan on Feb. 1. (see story on page 12).

Pakistani troops leave Somalia

MOGADISHU (AFP) — A chartered Boeing-747 Jumbo jet flew out of Mogadishu Sunday with 452 Pakistani soldiers aboard, reducing the U.N. troop strength in Somalia to 7,500. All are due to leave by March 6 or 7 following the failure of rival warlords to agree on a government of national unity for this lawless Horn of Africa country. The Pakistani contingent suffered 32 men killed and 96 wounded during their tour here. Twenty-four were killed and 64 wounded in one firefight on June 5, 1993, after they were ambushed by militias loyal to warlord Mohammad Farah Aideed.

Sharif Zeid affirms firm position against corruption

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker Sunday said his government was committed to fighting corruption and that "accusations that cannot be substantiated should be referred to the public prosecutor for investigation." The prime minister was commenting on a question raised by Deputy Nazih Ammarin (Karak) during a Parliament session Sunday in which the deputy said that some reports suggested that merchants were importing meat unfit for human consumption during and before the start of the Holy Month of Ramadan. Health Minister Aref Batayneh replied to the deputy by stressing that the Health Ministry does not allow the entry into the country of food before laboratory tests determine that they are fit for human consumption. He said that if tests prove the foodstuff not fit the ministry would promptly destroy it and refer the merchant to trial. On another issue, Deputy Toujan Faisal (Amman) called on the government to set up a special committee to

Opposition alleges arbitrary moves; Hammad denies charge

AMMAN (Agencies) — Opposition groups Sunday accused the government of arbitrary arrests and torture in a crackdown on opponents of Jordan's peace treaty with Israel. In Parliament, Interior Minister Salameh Hammad said there were no political prisoners in Jordan and maintained that the opposition was "blemishing the government record in order to make political capital." He said all inmates in the country's prisons were "criminals who violated the law." The 11 Islamic, left-wing and Arab nationalist groups held a joint press conference here to warn of "restrictions of democratic freedom" and to present a list of six demands to the government. They urged the authorities to cancel trials of opposition leaders and journalists accused of involvement with an unauthorised committee fighting against normalisation with Israel. The opposition should have the right to put its case in the government press and visit "political prisoners,"

they said, also calling for the lifting of a preaching ban on clerics opposed to the Arab-Israeli peace process. Ishaq Farhan, spokesman of the opposition coalition, alleged that Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker's government was waging a "bitter campaign against the opponents of the peace treaty and violating their human rights." At least five weekly newspapers affiliated with opposition parties had been taken to court on "fabricated charges," he said, adding that the heads of four political parties were interrogated by security forces. Among them was Bahjat Abu Gharbiyeh, head of a self-styled committee to fight normalisation of relations with Israel. Dr. Farhan said Mr. Abu Gharbiyeh was questioned for three hours last week on charges he had formed an "illegal political group." Dr. Farhan also announced a "popular congress against normalisation with Israel" would take place in coming months.

Israel maintains ban on Palestinians

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Israel will maintain its ban on Palestinian entry for at least another week but take a softer line in peace talks with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) if Yasser Arafat cracks down on militants, a cabinet minister said on Sunday. Environment Minister Yossi Sarid, a member of Israel's negotiating team with the PLO, said "there are reports which do not make it possible to lift the closure" of the Gaza Strip and West Bank. He did not elaborate, but was clearly referring to what Israeli newspapers said were intelligence reports of Palestinian guerrillas planning to carry out attacks in the run-up to the first anniversary of the February 25 Hebron mosque massacre. "Any responsible person could not reach a decision (to end the ban) this week," Mr. Sarid told Israel radio about the closure imposed after 21 Israelis were killed in Palestinian suicide bombing on Jan. 22.

Yemeni envoys report progress in Riyadh talks

RIYADH (Agencies) — Saudi Arabia has agreed in principle to mark out the whole of its border with Yemen and dropped opposition to possible international arbitration if they fail to agree, the Yemeni deputy prime minister said Sunday. Abdul Kader Bajammal said talks here on a Yemeni-Saudi border dispute had agreed "to proceed with marking out the whole border between the two countries." Part of the dispute centres on three provinces bordering northern Yemen and assigned to Saudi Arabia under a 1934 agreement which Sanaa says expired in 1992. So far the Saudis have only signalled their intention to try to settle the issue of the border between northern Yemen and three provinces of Najran, Jizan and Assir. They refused to discuss the issue of the rest of the frontier stretching the length of southern Yemen up to Oman. Mr. Bajammal, part of a Yemeni delegation to talks

here which began on Jan. 23, also said: "Riyadh is no longer reticent to the principle of resorting to arbitration" if their differences continue. But there was no official comment from the Saudis on Mr. Bajammal's remarks, which were greeted with scepticism by diplomats contacted from Dubai. Observers noted that in the past Yemeni negotiators installed for several weeks in Riyadh had differed with Sanaa over their interpretation of the talks. Another senior Yemeni official was also quoted on Sunday as saying the Riyadh talks were making progress. "There are strong indications that the talks will be crowned with success...we are confident and the talks are making headway," Yemen's Parliament Speaker Sheikh Abdullah Al Ahmar was quoted as saying by the Saudi English-language Arab News. "Others take months to discuss simple matters. We are discussing very important

Human rights group report censures PNA

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — A human rights group said Sunday that the Palestinian self-rule government has often acted in an "arbitrary and repressive fashion" since autonomy was established last May. The report by New York-based Human Rights Watch accused Palestinian authorities of allowing political arrests, press censorship and the beating of prisoners. The abuses, it said, posed a "grave threat" to the peace process. "The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) has failed to anchor its conduct in the rule of law. It has often acted in an arbitrary and repressive fashion..." the report said. Using travel bans and arrests, Israel continues to wield strong influence over the lives of Palestinians and shares responsibility with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) for the "pernicious state of human rights" in the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho, Human Rights Watch said. Its 50-page report, described as the first detailed

assessment of human rights under autonomy, criticised "indiscriminate roundups" of hundreds of Palestinians merely because they were suspected of belonging to opposition groups. Most were detained without warrants and held for days without being brought before a judge, it said. Khaled Al Kidra, the PNA's attorney-general, rejected the allegations as "unjustified." "The Palestinian Authority does not arrest people because of their political beliefs," Mr. Kidra told the Associated Press. "I believe that one of the top priorities of the Palestinian Authority is law and order." Mr. Kidra said 150 Palestinians were currently held in Palestinian jails and said all had access to attorneys. These included 38 members of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine who were detained in raids last week after a shooting attack that killed an Israeli security guard.

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Egypt refuses to budge on NPT

CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, despite U.S. pressure, has stuck to his guns in a war of words with Israel over the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) due to be extended this year.

"All I can say is the day Israel signs (the extension), I will sign," Mr. Mubarak said in an interview published Sunday in the Arabic-language daily Al Hayat newspaper.

"Let's wait and see what the Israelis do. If they say they are going to sign in three or four years we will put down reservations for three or four years. Then we will sign together," Mr. Mubarak said.

He added he "can't foresee for now any other solution" to the problem.

The United States, which provides Cairo with \$2.1 billion in aid annually, has urged Egypt not to link its position to Israel's.

"Egyptian public opinion will not understand how Israel can keep nuclear weapons in times of peace. Nor will they understand its refusal to sign the NPT while Egypt is asked to do it," Mr. Mubarak added.

Egypt and the 169 other countries that have signed the treaty are to meet in April to decide whether to extend the treaty for an indefinite or limited period.

Israel, warning that it is still threatened by countries like Iran which are not involved in the Middle East peace negotiations, has refused to sign it and has never acknowledged possessing nuclear weapons.

However, Western experts say the Jewish state has about 200 nuclear warheads.

Mr. Mubarak's top advisor, Osama Al-Baz, said Saturday that "Egypt will decide its position independently and will not allow any country to influence its policy."

"Some Arab countries support Egypt's position," Dr. Baz said during a meeting with students at Helwan University in the Cairo suburbs.

He said the possibility of a reduction in U.S. aid because of its position on extending the NPT was "very limited."

"In any case Egypt is convinced that this aid will not continue indefinitely," he added.

The draft U.S. budget for fiscal year 1996 announced last week maintains aid to Egypt at last year's levels, including almost \$1.3 billion in military funding.

"Within the framework of the peace negotiations, Israel must agree to rid the region of nuclear weapons," Dr. Baz said. "Israel's refusal to sign the NPT will provoke instability in the Middle East."

Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdul Meguid said in remarks published on Saturday that "some Arab countries are leaning towards signing without an Israeli commitment to do so."

A final decision on the issue will be taken during a ministerial meeting of the Arab League on March 22 in Cairo.

A senior foreign ministry official said Foreign Minister Amr Musa, who is due to attend talks Sunday in Washington aimed at unblocking the Arab-Israeli peace process, will also meet with members of the Republican Congress to ask for aid to be confirmed at current levels.

Egypt is currently modernising its army and the U.S. aid "cannot be regarded as negligible," Egyptian strategic studies expert Murad Dessuki said recently, but added that Cairo could turn to its Arab neighbours for help if the dollar flow dried up.



ISRAELI DIGS: Workers from the Israeli antiquities authority removing stones from the western wall in East Jerusalem as part of a new excavation. The operation is planned to end with the commemoration of what Israel considers as the 3000th anniversary of Jerusalem's founding in 1996 (AFP photo)

Syria, Lebanon to fight 'pressures' for peace

DAMASCUS (Agencies) — Syrian President Hafez Al Assad and his Lebanese counterpart Elias Hrawi agreed during talks in Damascus on Sunday to counter "increasing pressures" linked to the stalled peace talks with Israel, Syrian officials said.

Presidential spokesman Joubran Kourieh said the leaders co-chaired two sessions of the Higher Syrian-Lebanese Council over the weekend and held a closed-door meeting afterwards.

An official said the meetings were aimed at "countering increasing pressures which are being exerted on Syria and Lebanon with the aim of foiling the peace efforts."

He said both countries "are determined to continue their coordination and consultations despite all the pressures and other possibilities which might occur in the future."

The officials did not elaborate.

No tangible progress has been made in Israel's peace talks with Syria and Lebanon. Both countries want the Jewish state to withdraw fully from the Golan Heights.



Hafez Al Assad



Elias Hrawi

occupied from Syria in 1967, and from South Lebanon, occupied by Israel in 1982.

The official Syrian daily Al Baath reported U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher or Middle East peace coordinator Dennis Ross might return to the region to discuss how to break the deadlock on the Syrian and Lebanese peace tracks.

"With the continuation of a stalemate on the peace process and specifically on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks, there have been reports from the U.S. capital referring to

league.

They said Dr. Abdul Meguid will start his three-day visit with a meeting with Mr. Assad and other Syrian officials. He will then head for Lebanon for similar talks with Mr. Hrawi and his prime minister.

Dr. Abdul Meguid's visit to Syria and Lebanon is part of a tour he started last month to all Arab countries in an attempt to restore Arab solidarity shattered by the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

Hopes that Arab leaders could meet in a summit during celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of the Cairo-based organisation next March were dimmed after Dr. Abdul Meguid's tour of the six Gulf Arab states last January.

Mr. Kourieh said Mr. Assad and Mr. Hrawi, who were joined by Syrian and Lebanese parliament speakers and prime ministers, signed several resolutions which were adopted at the higher council meeting.

They included the council's 1995 budget, minutes of the meeting of a coordination and follow up committee and the council's emblem.

Bahrain 'will not recognise'

International Court ruling

MANAMA (Agencies) — Bahrain said late Saturday it would not recognise the ruling of the International Court of Justice, due Wednesday, on the admissibility of submissions regarding its border conflict with Qatar.

Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammad Ben Mubarak Al Khalifa, quoted by the Gulf News Agency, said Bahrain rejected the authority of the court in this matter without agreement on a joint submission on all points of the dispute.

He called on Qatar to begin bilateral negotiations on resolving the conflict, which dates back more than half a century, on their joint maritime border and various marine areas and islands.

If such negotiations failed, the minister said the dispute should go to the next summit in December of the Gulf Cooperation Council, of which both countries are members.

Qatar asked the International Court of Justice in July 1991 to rule that it had sovereignty over the Hawar islands and the Dibal area, without mentioning the other area in dispute, Zubara.

Bahrain contested the validity of Qatar's request and the competence of the court to rule on the matter. Last July the court gave both states until the following

Experts to rule on Alexander's tomb

CAIRO (AFP) — A team of experts is set to rule this week on whether a Greek archaeologist has found the long-lost tomb of Alexander the Great in the latest twist of a saga which has baffled historians for 2,000 years.

About two dozen Egyptian experts will visit the desert oasis site at Siwa, 750 kilometres west of Cairo, to determine for themselves whether Liana Sovatzki has really found the missing tomb and ended a search which has stretched across the centuries.

"The tomb we discovered belongs to Alexander the Great and nobody else," she told the sceptical panel on Thursday, describing it as "the greatest archaeological discovery of the last part of the century."

But several of the experts challenged her work already dismissed by a Greek scientific delegation which maintained the inscriptions found on three standing blocks used by Sovatzki to back up her claim date from a much later, Roman era.

"Every other year someone announces the discovery. There have been at least 139

sightings since the end of the 4th century" when the tomb's trace was lost, Jean-Yves Empereur, a specialist in Hellenic studies, told AFP.

In 1896 Count Alexander de Zogheb, a member of an influential family from the Egyptian port of Alexandria, noted in a treatise that "the question of the real site of the tomb of Alexander the Great is capable of inflaming the spirits."

"And every year there is an announcement that a sarcophagus has been found in Egypt, or Syria which is believed to be that of the conqueror."

The story of Alexander the Great who while still a young man led his army to conquer a large swathe of land from the southern shores of Greece as far as the edges of Asia has fascinated generations.

He was crowned in the Temple of the god Ammon in Siwa in 330 B.C., three years after conquering Egypt. After he died in Babylon at the age of 33 his body was brought to Egypt for burial, but the tomb has never been found.

Even today the prophesy of Aristander which decreed that "the kingdom which possesses the body of Alexander will be stable and flourish" holds powerful sway.

The tomb is described by Roman historians as a sumptuous edifice in Alexandria, founded by the Macedonian conqueror in 323 B.C.

According to their writings, Cleopatra VI rifled it for its treasures, then Ptolemy XI who lived from 107 to 105 A.D. melted down the gold coffin and replaced it with a glass one.

Julius Caesar visited the tomb as did Caligula, while Augustus paid homage to it by placing a golden crown on the body after beating Antony and Cleopatra VII in 30 A.D.

Much later in 1850 a Greek from Alexandria, Ambrose Schilizzi, said he had seen Alexander's body wrapped in papyrus in the cellars of the mosque of Nabi Daniel in the city.

Since then most of the city's residents have been convinced that the tomb is there.

In the 1930s various searches were carried out around

the mosque but in vain.

A waiter from a Greek cafe who died about three years ago devoted his life and his funds to the hunt.

And a professor from a Cairo University regularly asks for a permit to dig underneath the mosque despite being constantly turned down because of the building's religious nature.

"The most logical conclusions put the tomb on the side of the current Latin rite cemetery in Alexandria... in the middle of the tombs of the kings," Mr. Empereur said.

A stone found in an alabaster wall at the site, which forms an antechamber for what was a much larger monument, could belong to the tomb.

"We decided to go there (Siwa) to see the discovery within a week," said Abdul Halim Nureddin of the Egyptian antiquities authority after Thursday's meeting in Cairo of 25 experts.

"We agreed it was an interesting discovery, but we cannot decide for sure before going there," said the secretary general.

Geagea denies he ordered Chamoun family killing

BEIRUT (R) — A former Lebanese Christian warlord on trial for murder denied on Saturday that he had a political rival and his family assassinated in 1991 but admitted he twice tried to blow up another Christian warlord.

Samir Geagea, former chief of the Lebanese Forces (LF), told a Beirut court the militia had nothing to do with the October 1991 deaths of Dany Chamoun and his family, who were shot in their home by gunmen posing as Lebanese army soldiers.

"I cannot accept the allegation that a group from the Lebanese Forces carried out Chamoun's assassination... it is not true that a group from the Lebanese Forces assassinated Chamoun. I cannot believe that," Mr. Geagea told the court.

Former LF fighter Camille Karam told the court on Friday he was sent with a group of LF members dressed in Lebanese army uniforms to carry out "a mission" on the night Chamoun was killed.

Mr. Karam said he did not know what the mission was but he learned the next day that members of the group killed the Chamoun family.

However, Mr. Geagea told the court that LF intelligence suspected at the time that Elias Hobeika, his rival and predecessor as LF chief who is now Lebanon's minister for electricity and water resources, may have killed the Chamouns.

Mr. Geagea was giving evi-

dence for the first time in the Chamoun trial, one of two cases in which he faces a possible death penalty. He is being tried separately for the February 1994 bombing of a church north of Beirut in which 11 worshippers were killed.

Mr. Geagea admitted to the court that he twice tried to kill Mr. Hobeika, from whom he seized control of the LF in 1986 in a mini-civil war.

Mr. Hobeika became allied with Syria, whose army played an active part in Lebanon's 1975-90 civil war and still remains in Lebanon, after his ouster by Geagea.

Mr. Hobeika narrowly escaped death in 1986 when a bomb carried by a priest exploded in the bishop's palace in the eastern city of Zahle while he was visiting the bishop.

Mr. Geagea told the court he ordered this attempt, and a 1990 bid to blow up Mr. Hobeika's car in Beirut, because Mr. Hobeika's forces had assassinated LF officials in the Metn mountain region northeast of Beirut and later exploded car bombs in the east Beirut district of Astrakzayeh.

At a meeting of LF intelligence, military and security organs in 1986, it was decided to put a stop to that... and every agency gave assurances that it would do its best to that end," Mr. Geagea told the court.

"As a result the explosion took place in the bishopric in Zahle," he said.

Russian tax evaders swell Cyprus coffers

NICOSIA (AFP) — More than \$800 million of Russian assets have accumulated in Cyprus since the collapse of communism sparked a boom for the island, aided by its system of offshore company and banking laws.

Russians seeking to evade taxes and find a safe haven for their money, a base for a new business or just in need of a holiday have been flocking to the island in their thousands bringing with them bulging wallets.

Businessmen come "searching for possible investments, to import products, barter for raw materials or just simply to place out of reach of the Russian tax authorities profits and commissions," one European banker said.

Cyprus, realising the potential of its new-found visitors, has already dispensed with visa requirements.

According to the central bank more than 6,000 new offshore companies have registered on the island in the past two years, while a financial source said that 90 per cent of these firms were Russian. They won more than 30 per cent of the 17,256 offshore companies registered at the end of December.

Out of the 34 offshore banks on the island 10 of them are Russian with combined assets of \$700 million, banking sources said.

A further \$100 million of assets are held by Russians in Cypriot banks, they added.

One economist said the majority of the Russian capital which arrived in 1992 and 1993 was made from "commissions on the sale of oil or public goods made by former party apparatchiks who profited from the period when everything collapsed in the

former USSR."

But Takis Clerides, a partner in the international audit company KPMG, said: "We also have to distinguish the 'black money' which comes here for purposes of tax evasion, from the dirty drug-money and illegal arms sales, usually welcomed in Europe."

One European banker regretted that "the vast fortunes don't come here. They go to Switzerland, Austria or Luxembourg."

"Restrictions on controlling exchanges and transfers to Cyprus pushes the shady funds towards other more accommodating islands such as the Caribbean."

Income from the offshore sector has almost doubled from \$180 million to \$300 million in two years, and now accounts for eight per cent of the island's income in foreign currency.

But Cyprus is also benefiting from a boom in Russian tourists. More than 77,000 Russians were among the 2.1 million tourists who visited Cyprus in 1994, three times more than the 28,300 in 1993 and a huge leap from just over 9,500 in 1992.

"They are big spenders and many choose to stay in four or five-star hotels," said Theodoros Katsouridis, secretary of the travel agents association.

Eleni Andreou, a trader from the southern town of Limassol, said: "The Russians buy everything without argument and pay \$200 for a figurines and crystal trinkets which cost half the price elsewhere."

One restaurant owner who has translated his menu into Russian said: "We can recognise them by their physique and the noise they make. They behave like spoiled children and nouveaux riches."

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21:10 By Way of the Stars
22:00 News in English
22:30 Fall from Grace
22:50 Feature film "Ordinary People"

PRAYER TIMES
04:57 Fajr
06:17 Sunrise/Duha
11:50 Dhuhur
14:55 'Asr
17:23 Maghrib
18:41 'Isha

CHURCHES
St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swetitsky Tel: 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel: 627265

St. Joseph Church Tel: 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel: 637440
De la Salle Church Tel: 661757
Terresanta Church Tel: 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel: 623541
Anglican Church Tel: 630851, Tel: 620543
Armenian Catholic Church Tel: 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel: 775261
St. Ephraim Church Tel: 771751
Armenian International Church Tel: 625256
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel: 634326
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel: 644195
The Latter-Day Saints Tel: 654932
Church of Nazareth Tel: 675491
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel: 811295

WEATHER
Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.
It will be warm with clouds appearing at different altitudes and winds southeasterly moderate. In Amman, winds will be northerly moderate and sea calm.
Min./Max. temp.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Amman 4:18
Aqaba 12:25
Dera'a 3:31
Jordan Valley 11:23

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 18, Aqaba 25 Humidity readings: Amman 26 per cent, Aqaba 30 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Youssef Rashid 996301
Dr. Jamil Tarif 747710
Dr. Fayed Dabbas 291555
Dr. Abbas Al Hakim 835446
First pharmacy 619192
Feydows pharmacy 776336
Al Asma pharmacy 627055
Nairookh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636739
Yacoub pharmacy 648485
Shimciani pharmacy 637660
Nairookh pharmacy 623672
Najih pharmacy 647632

IRBID:
Dr. Ali Al Oman 272032
Alquds pharmacy (—)

ZARQA:
Dr. Randa Shahr 957710
Khalid pharmacy 953417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate 630341
Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 643402
Traffic Police 636340
Public Security Department 630721
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage 647667
Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality 741111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 011230
Central Amman Telephone 623100
Repairs 623100
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordanian Television 731111
Radio Jordan 741111
Water Authority 660101
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615

Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Oceania Air Int. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalid Maternity, J. Amn 644281/6
642411/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Mallat, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shimciani 664171/4
Shimciani Hospital 669121
University Hospital 845845
Al-Musharraf Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajireen 77101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafiah 775111/26
Army, Marjeh 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 622540/50
Amal Hospital 674155
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)963323
Zarqa National Hospital 674155
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)960560
Al-Hilma Modern Hospital (09)969891
Princess Basma Hospital (02)272275
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275
Ibn Al-Nafes Hospital (02)247100

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel: (08)53200. It, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

07:20 Sanaz (RJ)
08:35 Jeddah (RJ)
09:00 Damascus (RJ)
09:15 Aqaba (RJ)
09:40 New Delhi (RJ)
09:55 Beirut (RJ)
09:55 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:00 Dhahran (RJ)
10:00 Cairo (RJ)
17:00 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
19:45 Bangkok (RJ)
19:10 Casablanca, Tunis (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

06:45 Khartoum (SD)
09:35 Cairo (MS)
12:35 Muscat, Abu Dhabi (GF)
14:35 Klev (RJ)
17:00 Rome (AZ)
17:50 Paris, Damascus (AF)
18:15 Dubai (EK)
23:10 London (BA)
01:10 Amsterdam (KL)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

06:45 Beirut (RJ)
07:00 Aqaba (RJ)
08:35 Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)
12:00 London (RJ)
12:45 Cairo (RJ)
19:45 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
20:30 Abu Dhabi (RJ)
20:40 Damascus (RJ)
21:25 Dubai, Muscat (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

06:00 Istanbul (TK)
06:15 Beirut (MS)
06:20 Cairo (AE)
13:30 Beirut (RJ)
14:00 Bahrain, Abu Dhabi, Muscat (GF)
14:30 Khartoum (SD)
15:35 Klev (RJ)
19:15 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
02:20 Amsterdam (KL)
02:35 London (BA)

HIJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman 8:00 every Monday
Arr. Damascus 5:00 p.m. every Monday
Dep. Damascus 7:30 a.m. every Sunday
Arr. Amman 5:00 p.m. every Sunday

MARKET PRICES
Upperflower price in fils per kg

Apple 700 / 400
Banana 600
Banana (Mekammar) 620
Cabbage 150 / 100
Cauliflower 300 / 250
Cauliflower 100 / 60
Cucumbers (large) 180 / 120
Cucumbers (small) 150 / 120
Eggplant 280 / 180
Garlic 350 / 400
Grape Fruit 280 / 180
Lemon 350 / 160
Marrow (small) 180 / 100
Marrow (large) 350 / 160
Onion (small) 350 / 300
Onion (large) 350 / 300
Onion (dry) 350 / 300
Pepper (red) 1200 / 1000
Pepper (green) 500 / 400
Potato 330 / 200
Radish 180 / 100
Spinach 100 / 60
String Beans 1000 / 400
Tomato 300 / 180
Turnip 180 / 120



NEWS IN BRIEF

King condoles the Adaleh family

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Sunday visited Al Adaleh family in Thannieh, near Karak, and conveyed His Majesty King Hussein's condolences to the family over the death of Ahmad Al Adaleh, Jordan's ambassador to Syria. Prince Hassan praised the late Jordanian envoy as a dedicated man who had worked with dedication to serve his country. Al Adaleh family thanked Prince Hassan for his visit and expressed their gratitude to the Hashemite leadership. Prince Hassan then joined worshippers attending the noon prayer at Al Thannieh Mosque. The late Adaleh died early Saturday at King Hussein Medical Centre where he was receiving medical treatment. His body was laid to rest late Saturday in his hometown of Thannieh. The Karak governor stood in for King Hussein in attending the funeral.

Ghosheh, UNRWA head hold talks

AMMAN (Petra) — Services to the Palestinians living in refugee camps throughout the country figured high during a meeting held Sunday between Director of the Palestinian Affairs Department Assem Ghosheh and Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) in Jordan Ele Saaf. Mr. Ghosheh and Mr. Saaf stressed the importance of coordinating joint efforts to prepare for the major donor countries' conference which will be held here on March 8. Mr. Ghosheh said the meeting comes at a crucial time, when UNRWA's budget makes it difficult for it to cope with the increasing demand for its services by the refugee community. Mr. Ghosheh called on the international community to support UNRWA's budget to enable it to provide health and educational services and job opportunities.

Gharabeh inaugurates exhibition

AMMAN (Petra) — The University of Jordan President, Fawzi Gharabeh, Sunday opened the second pharmaceutical week, organised by the Faculty of Pharmacy, and inaugurated the pharmaceutical industries exhibition held on the sidelines of the week. On display at the exhibition, which is held under the theme "Towards an advanced national pharmaceutical industry," are drug samples produced by Al Hikmat Pharmaceutical Company, the Arab Centre for Pharmaceutical and Chemical Industries, Jordan Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Company (JPM), Al Ram Pharmaceutical Industries Company and Dar Al Dawaa.

Chamber of industry invited to exhibit

AMMAN (Petra) — The Amman Chamber of Industry has received an invitation from the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry to take part in Muscat's third International Exhibition which will be held between Oct. 15 and 21 to coincide with Oman's celebrations of its national day. The invitation was contained in a letter from Yacoub Ben Hamad Al Harithi, president of the Omani chamber of Commerce and Industry to Khaldoun Abu Hassan, president of the chamber of industry.

JNRCS chief returns from Venezuela

AMMAN (Petra) — President of the Jordan National Red Crescent Society (JNRCS) Mohammad Al Hadid Sunday returned home after a five-day visit to Venezuela where he attended meetings of the vice presidents of the International Federation for the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and participated in the Venezuelan celebrations for the centennial anniversary since establishing the Venezuelan Red Cross Society. In an arrival statement, Dr. Hadid said that the meetings discussed, among other things, issues pertaining to respect of international humanitarian law and promoting awareness about it, activities of the various Red Cross and Red Crescent societies worldwide, election of the standing committee members, in addition to a study on the need to revise some provisions of the charter of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

Australian delegation due in Amman

AMMAN (J.T.) — An Australian economic delegation led by Minister of Trade Bob MacMillan is due in Amman in Feb. 17 for a four-day official visit to Jordan. The delegation will hold talks with Jordanian private and public sectors on trade and economic cooperation. During the visit, the Australian minister will formally inaugurate a regional office of the Australian meat and livestock corporation. Agreement on the opening of the office was concluded between the Australian and Jordanian governments last Thursday in Amman.

120-year-old woman dies

IRBID (Petra) — A 120-year-old woman died here Saturday in her hometown of Kufr Kefya in the Irbid Governorate. Fatima Issa Al Omari, who was said to be born in 1875, was one of the few Jordanians to live so long. She was reported in good health until her death. The late Fatima is survived by more than 300 sons, daughters and grand children, according to Petra.

RJ to launch Amman-Osaka route

AMMAN (Petra) — The Royal Jordanian (RJ) will launch a new air route between Amman and Osaka, in Japan, as of May, to coincide with the start of the Jordanian Cultural Week activities, which will be launched by that time. Two weekly flights will be operating on this line to serve the passenger and cargo movement. This route will also help market Jordanian tourism in Japan.

245 villages connected to power grid

AMMAN (Petra) — Some 245 villages, with a total of 8,990 houses, were connected to the national electricity power grid during the past two years at a total cost of JD 14.3 million, according to Director of the Jordanian Rural Electrification Project Samih Ujjalat. Mr. Ujjalat said the project management started this year to implement the second phase which includes supplying electricity to 146 villages inhabited by 30,000 people. He said the second phase, which will cost JD 4.9 million, will end by the beginning of 1996.

Agreements to help improve investment climate in Kingdom

AMMAN (Petra) — To provide information about investment opportunities and contribute to creating a proper investment climate, the Investment Promotion Department (IPD) Sunday concluded three agreements with three local consulting companies to undertake studies on industrial, agricultural and tourist investments in Jordan.

Under the industrial investments agreement, a local consulting company specialised in setting up industrial projects is asked to identify 15 projects covering various parts of Jordan. The company then prepares its studies and submits them to the IPD within 105 days after the day of assigning it the work. Costs for projects in this sector will range from JD 50,000 and JD 1 million.

Under the second agreement, which covers the agricultural sector, a local company specialised in engineering and management of agricultural projects has been assigned to identify 60 investment opportunities in this field before the end of March 1995.

The third agreement, which covers the tourism sector, provides for identifying and doing the preparatory work for 15 investment opportunities, including the construction of tourist hotels, establishing restaurants, resthouses, parks and towers in hilly areas, ranging in height from 70 to 80 metres, in addition to constructing swimming pools, chalets and gardens in the Jordan Valley. The agreements were signed for the IPD by its Director General Assem Hindawi and for the companies by their respective directors general.

Journalists' roundtable to be held

AMMAN (U.N. Information Service) — As a means to raise media awareness and to spark discussions on the issues of the upcoming World Summit for Social Development, the United Nations Department of Public Information in collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), is organising a journalists' roundtable on Feb. 15 and 16.

During the two-day roundtable, about 15 prominent journalists from various Arab countries will participate in a panel discussion on social development issues. In addition, short briefings on the social summit and its goals will be given by ESCWA executive secretary Dr. Hazem Al Beblawi, United Nations Resident Representative Osman Hashem, Department of Public Information Representative Marian Awad and Human Development Section Chief/Social Development Issues and Policies Division Dr. George Kossafi.

During the panel discussion, chief editors and prominent journalists from Al Ahram, Al Hayat, Al Sharq Al Awsat, Al Ayyam, Al Nahar, Al Safir, Al Qabas, Yemen Times, Al Dustour, and Al Rai will discuss the issues of the summit as well as the role of the media in raising public awareness.

The World Summit for Social Development, scheduled to take place in Copenhagen between March 6 and 12, 1995, will address three core themes: alleviation and reduction of poverty, expansion of productive employment and enhancement of social integration.

First stages of anti-desertification project completed east of Amman

AMMAN (Petra) — The first and second stages of a project to fight off desertification and improve soil fertility have been completed in a semi-desert area 30 kilometres south east of Amman and it is hoped that work on the third stage will begin during this year, according to Dr. Awni Tueimeh, the project's technical director.

The project, conducted by the University of Jordan in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture with financing from the European Union (EU), is being implemented on a 2,000-dunum plot of land in the badia region, located 14 kilometres east of Muwaqqat, said Dr. Tueimeh Sunday.

He said that the cost of the four-year project is estimated to be JD 2.566 million. The EU will be providing 60 per cent of the cost and the rest will be provided by the University of Jordan.

The land where the project is being implemented, Dr. Tueimeh said, is part of Jordanian areas that receive between 100 and 200 millimetres of rain only. Such land is estimated in Jordan to be of a 12-million-dunum area, accounting for 13 per cent of the Kingdom's total surface, according to Dr. Tueimeh.

He said that the plan entails better and more efficient means for the exploitation of surface water, improving the fertility of the soil, introducing ways to stop soil desertification, increase vegetation and forest and fruit tree saplings and water harvesting methods as well as the collection of rain water in pools, said Dr. Tueimeh who stressed that these steps are vital to stop desertification which is encroaching from the east.

Preliminary studies, he noted, have shown that the encroachment of the desert happened only in the past few decades and that the lands in the badia region still hold productive potentials. Leaving the badia region, which stretches from the north to the south, unattended and unexploited is a recipe for inviting danger to the neighbouring agricultural areas which lie on the western heights of the Kingdom, said Dr. Tueimeh.

In the first stage of the project, said Dr. Tueimeh, a survey of the soil was conducted and detailed maps of each type of soil were prepared, followed by a survey of the wild plants existing in the badia region, according to Dr. Tueimeh.

He said that the second stage entailed a topographic survey which helped locate the best and most appropriate locations for setting up earthen dams to collect water. This stage, he added, included the construction of three dams with an overall storage capacity of 85,000 cubic metres as well as the creation of three land reserves.

In the course of the project, said Dr. Tueimeh, the concerned parties have launched a public awareness campaign aiming mainly at orienting farmers on ways to protect the land.

Crime is on the decrease, but trend is alarming, says sociologist

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Crime is on the decrease in Jordan and is considered low compared to other countries, according to Brigadier General Fayez Koublan of the Public Security Criminal Investigation Department (PSCID).

A total of 36,694 crimes were committed last year, of which 32,131 were misdemeanours. According to Brig. Gen. Koublan, murder decreased by 9.4 per cent in 1994 when, he said, there were 87 murder cases, compared to 96 murders in 1993. Crimes of honour ranked highest among the total number of reported crimes in the Kingdom. There were 24 reported crimes of honour. An average of 28 women are killed in crimes of honour annually. Family disputes came in second, with 17 cases, and quarrels that resulted in death came in third, with 15 murders.

Brig. Gen. Koublan said that there were only 11 unsolved crimes in Jordan last year.

The PSCID statistics however indicate that attempted murders saw an increase over the last year, with 197, compared to 165 in the previous year.

The statistics show that there was a decrease by 32 per cent in reported smuggling cases and by 19.2 per cent in currency forgery cases.

The number of major harm, such as attempted murder, rape, sodomy, embezzlement, drug trafficking and robbery, saw an overall increase compared to 1993, while minor harm, such as petty theft, accounted for an increase of 5 per cent, the PSCID statistics showed.

Brig. Gen. Koublan said that most violations committed against children were "in most cases attributed to parents' negligence."

Many children are exposed to psychological and physical abuse because they are left alone in the streets without appropriate attention, according to Brig. Gen. Koublan.

Traffic Department statistics of 1994 indicate that children under the age of 10 registered the highest numbers of run over, that lead to the death of 93 children, with 192 people being run over last year. Between the years 1990

and 1993, an average of 384 people were killed in road accidents annually; of this, 34 per cent were children under 15.

Brig. Gen. Koublan said that crime in Jordan is affected by social, economic and environmental factors.

"Crime in most societies in the world naturally grows with the amount of increased technology, expansion of cities, internal and external immigration, and the increase of economic activities that leads to the weakening of the social fabric."

"In most countries in the world the growth in crime ranges between 12 to 18 per cent annually. In Jordan the rate of crime has experienced a notable decrease, and reached 8.4 per cent in 1994," he said.

In the meantime, fraud registered a 29.4 per cent increase. PSCID statistics indicate.

Brig. Gen. Koublan said that the reason fraud cases increased is that many people wanted to make a quick profit and were not cautious and careful of who they deal with, thus falling victims to frauds.

The official also pointed to a rise in the number of people being killed as a result of firing live ammunition during weddings, and called on the society to try to abandon such habits.

Four people were killed and more than 50 injured in 1994 as a result of these firings, said Brig. Gen. Koublan.

In 1986, PSCID indicated that there were 19,597 crimes of all kinds, of which 16,625 were misdemeanours. There were 66 murder cases the same year. In 1990, the total number of major crimes jumped to 21,885 and there were 84 murder cases. In 1991, the total numbers saw another jump, with 26,213 crimes on various counts, with 4,003 major harms.

University of Jordan sociologist Musa Shtrwei said he believed that overall crime was not decreasing, but "maybe there are changes in the types of crime."

"Although the actual number of murders, for example, decreased, we saw an increase in the number of attempted murders (32) and although they were not executed, still it is important because there was a registered attempt," Dr.

Shtrwei explained.

Dr. Shtrwei attributed the change in crime trends to an increase in urbanisation over the past 20 years which led to overcrowding, increase in poverty, unemployment and the presence of foreign workers who mix in the Jordanian economic and social life.

"If you look at previous years, they were hard years economically, politically and socially; we noticed forced migration and the country experienced return migration causing high unemployment and poverty," he said.

"Crime is natural in a society where population increases, and that is obvious," said Dr. Shtrwei, adding that crime in rural areas is less because there is more homogeneity in these areas.

Therefore, he added, social control weakens in urban areas and that contributes to an increased number of crimes at large.

Dr. Shtrwei also referred to the number of reported rape cases over the past few years, noting that it is "on the increase." Last year, there were 36 reported rape cases. In 1993, there were 29 cases.

Dr. Shtrwei identified rape as an expression or assertion of power by men against women.

He emphasised that what was alarming was the trend not the size. Although the number of reported rapes last year was low, he said, they registered a significant increase from one year to the other.

"Based on my own experience, rape cases are high and they are on the increase as well," said Dr. Shtrwei.

He attributed the many cases of rape mainly to lack of education, sexual frustration, the social and economic situation, like poverty, and to an important aspect, which is the change of the women's role in the society.

"Women are gaining more power and control, and some men are taking it as an indication of losing their power, thus rape is an expression of the imbalance of power between men and women."

According to Dr. Shtrwei, the trend is that crime is on the increase and "we still have a problem."

"If it keeps increasing at this rate, we will have a very big problem concerning crimes in the near future," said Dr. Shtrwei.

Jordan should comply with AI plan of action for its office to reopen

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A visiting Amnesty International (AI) team said human rights groups in Jordan should comply with a strict plan of action in order to reopen AI office in the Kingdom.

June Ray, AI programme director for the Middle East region, said the decision was taken only after all other attempts to activate the AI Jordan office ended in failure.

When the organisation's credibility is put at risk, we are forced to take such a decision," Ms. Ray said. "We are laying the basis for a better growth and giving a clear message to safeguard AI's work."

The London-based secretariat decided to close its offices in Amman last month due to international conflicts, according to a statement released by the secretariat.

At present, the secretariat has drawn up a "clear and strict" plan of action for the groups in Jordan but the Middle East specialist said there is no specified time framework. "When we can justify its existence, the office will be reopened again," she said.

A new set of criteria for membership was included in the new plan of action, as well as training programmes introduced to train members on AI work and objectives, she said. "We thought they reached the stage to open an office," she said, "We will be monitoring their work in the coming months to ensure they will not engage in high profile activities."

This is not the first time AI closes down its offices. Similar decisions were taken in India and Senegal as well as other countries. In some countries, AI offices are subject to harassment from the ruling authorities.

"In Tunisia, our office could not receive the mail and publications we are sending them," Ms. June said.

"Members should function under the AI umbrella. Their main aim should be to work for human rights issues and not for their political affiliations," said Abdul Mital Kishab, AI membership coordinator for the Middle East and Maghreb Union.

Until its closure, the AI had 18 groups that included about 300 members.

Lecture is part of campaign to establish secretaries' union

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Jordanian Women's Union (JWU) Sunday announced that March 8 will be designated for holding a lecture entitled "Towards establishing a secretaries' union," part of a campaign launched by the union towards that end.

"The reason we chose March 8, which happens to be the International Women's Day, is because we want to emphasise the importance of establishing a secretaries' union," said Asma Khader, president of the JWU.

Addressing members of the committee which was established to study and plan a project for the union, Ms. Khader said that a draft project for internal laws and legislations for the secretaries union was formed and is currently being studied by the committee for approval before it is submitted to the Ministry of Labour on the day of the lecture.

The JWU move came after the union was approached by several secretaries in different fields of work complaining of their work conditions and the abuse they face on daily basis.

The secretaries union, if established, will serve as any other professional union in the Kingdom, and will grant the secretaries their rights and duties.

Ms. Khader further added that the committee had started to collect secretaries' signatures and "we already gathered enough signatures to meet the necessary requirements to establish a union for secretaries."

According to Ms. Khader, the Jordanian Labour Law stipulates that a minimum of 30 workers in the same field can apply to establish a union.

"At this time, we have more signatures than what is required and we hope that when the union is established more secretaries will sign in," Ms. Khader said.

Ms. Khader said however that the secretaries' committee faced many problems while collecting signatures, mainly concerning the secretaries' names and place of occupation.

"Some secretaries feared to sign their names on the petition and were asking us why we asked them to write their names and the name of the place because most of them were afraid they would be dismissed," Ms.

Khader said. The secretaries committee also formed a questionnaire, to be distributed randomly to secretaries in Amman, Irbid and Zarqa, to study the concerns, history and other problems that might face the secretaries. Ms. Khader said.

"The questionnaire intends to study all aspects of abuse the secretaries face, their work stability, low wages and, most important, to get exposed to the reality of their problems and set our priorities based on it," said Ms. Khader.

Moreover, Ms. Khader said, the questionnaire will try to establish if secretaries have any knowledge of their rights, if they were fired for no reason or asked to work extra hours, or were sexually harassed by their employers.

Ms. Khader said that another priority for the questionnaire is to determine the wages most secretaries receive at their jobs.

"We have had repeated complaints that most secretaries received less than the minimum wages and some of them do not even get paid if they work extra time," she said.

According to Claire Salah, director of students affairs at Al Wasfieh Secretariat Training Centre, secretaries wages have been declining in the 1990s.

She said that between the year 1980 to 1985, a secretary's fare used to range between JD120 and JD150 for beginners. These days, she said, the wages declined to reach JD60 to JD80 for a beginner.

"What would such an amount of money do for these secretaries? Half of it goes for transportation and the other half for food," said Ms. Salah who is responsible for more than 350 students who will graduate to become secretaries.

The secretaries committee suggested inviting experts in the secretarial field to lecture on March 8, Ms. Khader said, adding that the JWU is suggesting asking deputy Mustafa Shnekar, Itaf Halaseh, director of the Women's Department at the Ministry of Labour, Youssef Abu Diab, director of the Wasfieh centre, and a secretary to talk about the problems the secretaries face at work, their dreams, ambitions and demands.

According to Ms. Khader, the JWU intends to announce the results of the questionnaire on Labour Day, May 1.

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

EXHIBITIONS

- ★ Exhibition of paintings under glass entitled "Oriental Roots" by Fatiha Rahou at the Royal Cultural Centre.
- ★ "Young America" exhibit (with photographs featuring Americans of all ages) at the American Center.
- ★ Exhibition of works by Qasim Al Samir at the Housing Bank Complex Gallery.
- ★ Book exhibition at the Royal Cultural Centre. Also showing another exhibition of Arabic Calligraphy.
- ★ Exhibition of the works of Lebanese artist Amin Al Basha at Darat Al Funn. Also showing works by contemporary Arab artists.
- ★ Educational works depicting the life of "Voltaire" at the French Cultural Centre.
- ★ Exhibition of works by Hala Mahayni at the Petra International Hotel in Aqaba.

FILMS

- Film entitled "Mata Hari" at the French Cultural Centre at 7:00 p.m.
- Film entitled "Onkel Wanja" at Goethe-Institut at 7:30 p.m.

PLAY

- Play (in Arabic) entitled "Ye Who Are Hearing" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

RAMADAN CONCERT

- Concert by Beharab Rahadi at the Royal Cultural Centre at 9:00 p.m.

Minister inspects Ajloun area hospital

AJLOUN (Petra) — Health Minister Aref Batayneh Sunday visited the Ajloun government hospital to inspect health services offered by the Iman government hospital in Ajloun city and the health centres in the region.

He said that he wanted to examine the health situation and medical service offered through the health centres to the local communities.

Dr. Batayneh announced that the Health Ministry will soon increase the Iman hospital beds from 85 to 110 to cope with the demand on hospitalisation services.

He said that the ministry will also set up a residential quarter for the hospital nurses, noting that the ministry will also study the condition of the hospital workers with a view to increasing their

wages as they are far less than those of the nurses and assistant nurses.

The minister promised to increase the basic salaries of these workers.

Accompanied by Dr. Ziyad Abanda, director of the Health Department, the minister toured the Iman hospital sections and was briefed on the services offered to the public.

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Mexican army's manhunt for guerrilla commander grinds on

Protesters seek end to Chiapas crackdown

SAN CRISTOBAL DE LAS CASAS, Mexico (R) — The Mexican army's manhunt for masked guerrilla leader Subcommander Marcos continued as the government tightened its clampdown on indigenous rebels in the southern state of Chiapas.

With first blood drawn after two soldiers were shot and killed Friday in rebel territory, security forces consolidated their control of the guerrillas' best-known jungle base at Guadalupe Tepeyac, about 80 miles (130 km) southeast of this colonial city, bringing in light tanks and armoured troop vehicles.

The National Defence Ministry said 2,500 troops, 33 aircraft, 30 tanks and 32 armoured vehicles were in-

volved in the operation launched Thursday that brought at least a dozen formerly rebel-held towns under military control in what the government says is a legal action, not military.

Com. Marcos, in an interview published Saturday by La Jornada newspaper in Mexico City, struck a defiant tone and pledged drawn-out guerrilla warfare if the clampdown continued.

"What is coming, if nobody stops it, is guerrilla war," Com. Marcos said in an interview apparently carried out Thursday in Guadalupe Tepeyac. "They are taking us towards long-term, debilitating armed resistance... we will win."

An officer commanding

government paratroopers who entered the guerrilla base Friday said mainly old men and women and young children had been found in the village, and very few young men of fighting age remained there.

"It seems there were no transgressors here, they had probably fled," he said. Newspaper reports said the army found several Chiapas towns all but abandoned as they marched in.

A civilian pilot who overflew the zone said he had seen a column of rebels of the self-styled Zapatista National Liberation Army heading from Guadalupe Tepeyac, where the rebels have held news conferences and even a huge civilian convention for

6,000 people in recent months, into rugged, jungle-covered mountains to the north.

Government troops blocked access to the conflict zones to virtually all journalists and appeared to be cutting off roads out of the area to prevent Com. Marcos' escape. His whereabouts were unknown, but his refuge was believed to be in the area where the rebel column was seen headed.

A spokesman for the National Defence Ministry told Reuters Saturday that the soldiers, one a colonel, were shot in an ambush by several rebels when their column of armoured vehicles entered the town of Nuevo Momon west of Guadalupe Tepeyac. The attorney general's office earlier said that only the colonel had died in the attack, which it attributed to a lone sniper.

Mexican News Agency Notimex said another 10 troops were injured in the incident.

The attack shattered a ceasefire which had held since mid-January 1994 following the New Year's Day uprising by the Zapatistas to demand indigenous rights and greater democracy.

President Ernesto Zedillo ordered the arrest of Com. Marcos and identified him for the first time as Rafael Sebastian Guillen. The identity of the charismatic leader had been a mystery, hidden behind a trademark ski mask. Mr. Zedillo ordered the



Mexican army patrols enter the restricted road to Guadalupe Tepeyac from Las Margaritas, Chiapas, 78 kms southeast of San Cristobal de Las Casas. The army has restricted all access to their areas of operation as they search for

Zapatista leader Subcommander Marcos, who was last reported in Guadalupe Tepeyac. The army is under presidential orders to detain Marcos and other Zapatista leaders. (AFP photo)

arrests of Com. Marcos and other Zapatista leaders Thursday after the discovery of arms caches in Mexico City, Veracruz and the state of Mexico. He said the caches indicated the Zapatistas intended to widen their war, not negotiate a peaceful end to the wrenching crisis.

A statement released by his office late Friday said security forces were acting with strict respect for the law and denied that the surprise move against the Zapatistas was a sign of a new headline approach to the insurgency.

"This is not authoritarianism or political hardening," the statement said. Mexico City newspaper El Financiero, citing an unnamed source close to U.S. intelligence agencies, reported Saturday that Mr. Zedillo ordered his crackdown after Mexican Armed Forces lead-

ers told him to act now or "his days as president of Mexico would be numbered."

Two of the five alleged Zapatista leaders ordered held by Mr. Zedillo were arrested Friday in Chiapas.

The hope, one government official said, was that cutting off the leadership of the Zapatistas would lead to their disbandment as a military force.

Despite the fatal attack in Guadalupe Tepeyac, there appeared to be little rebel resistance to the military advance as the Zapatistas, said to number up to 12,000, melted away in the face of the heavily armed security forces.

Although it was not clear if the guerrillas were simply avoiding contact with government forces or running for the hills in disarray, the advance drove a wedge into Zapatista territory and raised the question of whether they will ever again be able to

claim control of large parts of the state.

Meanwhile, angry protesters filled Mexico City's huge main square Saturday calling for an end to the government's crackdown in Chiapas.

The crowd, estimated by witnesses at about 100,000 people, shouted anti-government slogans and held up signs supporting the Zapatista National Liberation Army.

March leaders, who included members of the political opposition and pro-democracy groups, promised in the coming weeks to step up the pressure on Mr. Zedillo to stop the military intervention in Chiapas and negotiate an end to the wrenching crisis.

"This (protest) is going to spread to the entire country," protester Jorge Hernandez, a 29-year-old anthropology teacher, said.

Honest Beijing cable returns 81 years' wages

BEIJING (R) — An honest Beijing cab driver returned to a Russian woman passenger a lost bag containing the equivalent of a lifetime's wages for the average urban Chinese, the Beijing daily reported Sunday. On Friday afternoon the woman took a taxi from Beijing's most expensive department store to a nearby hotel where she got out, leaving behind her bag containing 2550,000 yuan (\$30,200), it said. An hour later, she found her bag was missing but did not know the name of the driver or his company. In a panic, she had a friend call the city taxi hotline and left her number. Five minutes later, the operator called back to say that the driver had already handed in the bag. "I could not imagine this would happen," the paper quoted her as saying. "If this were Moscow, there is no way I would have got the money." Her hotel overlooks a street popular with Russians who buy large quantities of clothes, coats and jackets which they take home and re-sell. The average urban Chinese in 1994 earned 3,150 yuan (\$373), official figures show.

Paul McCartney composes classical work

LONDON (R) — A classical work for piano by Paul McCartney will be premiered at a special charity dinner hosted by Prince Charles next month, the Sunday Telegraph newspaper said. "The Prince of Wales has invited the former Beatle... to play at a £250 (\$290) a head dinner to raise money for the Royal College of Music, of which the prince is president," the newspaper said. McCartney, 53, will not himself play the solo piece for piano entitled A Leaf. Instead, it will be performed by Russian Anya Alexeyev, a former student at the college.

Woman arrested for smuggling diamonds

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — A Belgian woman was arrested as she attempted to leave South Africa with some one million rand (\$282,000) worth of diamonds hidden in her vagina, police said Saturday. The unnamed 48-year-old woman was detained shortly before she was due to board a flight to Germany late Friday after detectives searched her luggage and found condoms and vaginal cream, police spokesman Colonel Dave Bruce said. "Suspicious diamond squad detectives took her to hospital where she was X-rayed," Col. Bruce said. "The X-ray showed two foreign objects in her vagina." Realising the game was up, the woman removed two condoms from her vagina containing the uncut diamonds. Col. Bruce said, adding that the woman will appear in court Monday.

'Lion King' artwork brings record

NEW YORK (AP) — An auction of artwork from Disney's The Lion King, the top-grossing movie of 1994, raised almost \$2 million Saturday, a record for animation art. The standing-room-only sale at Sotheby's attracted a wide range of bidders, from seasoned collectors to parents with young Lion King fans, said Frances Ingersoll, the Auction House's animation art specialist. The highest price paid at the 256-piece auction was \$39,100 for an image of the lion cub Simba with Pumbaa and Warthog and Timon the meerkat. The image, which went for almost eight times the pre-sale estimate, was bought by a private European collector.

Explicit Demi Moore poster upsets land of 'Ooh-la-la'

PARIS (AFP) — An explicit poster of film star Demi Moore showing her straddling actor Michael Douglas with her skirt pulled up has been ordered removed from billboards in three French towns. The life-size poster advertising Barry Levinson's film Disclosure has been removed in Versailles, west of Paris. "Arachon, on the Atlantic coast and Aix-en-Provence, southeastern France, in Arachon, Henri Letaille said "I received many complaints from parents who think the advertisement should be less suggestive."

Reconciliation ceremonies to mark anniversary of Dresden bombings

BONN (AFP) — Germans, British and Americans Monday mark the 50th anniversary of the wartime Dresden bombings in a city rebuilt upon the ashes of the Allies' unprecedented firestorm.

On Feb. 13 and 14, 1945, Allied bomber planes reduced the old German city of Dresden, which was filled with civilian refugees fleeing the Russian advance, to a great blazing ruin.

Estimates of the number of people who died in the inferno vary widely. Those based on records available today put the figure at 25,000-35,000, but a toll as high as 300,000 is also mentioned.

On one aspect of the event, however, the historians are near-unanimous. There was very little military-strategic justification for wreaking such thorough death and destruction on the city.

Rather, as a German-based British diplomat commented this week in connection with the 50th anniversary commemoration of the bombing of Dresden, "it was one of those things that happen when war takes place."

The principal aim of the bombing, in a war which was characterised by aerial

attacks on civilian targets on both sides, had been to demolish the Germans and break the resistance of Hitler's Third Reich.

The British, Americans and Russians agreed at their Yalta conference that Dresden should be hit, to prevent the Germans from using it as a rallying point against the Russian advance, according to British sources.

For weeks the chief of Britain's Bomber Command, Air-Marshal Arthur "Bomber" Harris, had been planning a "double strike" against Dresden, and now the weather was right. In the event there was a triple strike and more.

The first warplanes set out with incendiary bombs to illuminate the city.

In two separate raids three hours apart on the night of Feb. 13-14, 796 Lancasters and nine Mosquitoes dropped 1,478 tonnes of high explosive and 1,182 tonnes of incendiary devices, according to the Bomber Command Diaries.

In the first attack, 244 Lancasters dropped over 800 tonnes of bombs. In the second, 529 Lancasters dropped more than 1,800 tonnes.

Buildings glowed red like hearth-stones. One Lancaster pilot guessed that 100 square kilometres (nearly 40 square miles) had been set ablaze and said he felt the heat from the flames in his cockpit.

Early on the afternoon of Feb. 14 came a third raid, this time carried out by 311 US B-17s, which dropped 771 tonnes of bombs in the space of 20 minutes. The Americans bombed Dresden again on Feb. 15 and March 2.

The city was razed practically to the ground, with just stumps of buildings among the flattened rubble. Most of the bodies were unidentifiable cinders. In the city cemetery they buried human ashes by the cubic metre.

The poet Gerhart Hauptmann wrote: "He who has forgotten how to weep, learns to cry again with the going down of Dresden." Famed for its artistic culture, the city had been known as "the Florence of the Elbe."

The ceremonies in Dresden will be an expression of reconciliation between Britain and Germany in particular, and among those participating will be the Bishop of Coventry and Coventry's Lord Mayor.

Manila: China cut back force in Spratlys

MANILA (R) — China has withdrawn seven of the nine ships it deployed around a coral reef claimed by the Philippines in the disputed Spratly Islands in the South China Sea, military officials said Sunday.

But the situation remained a cause for concern because the two Chinese vessels still in the area of Mischief Reef are both warships, said the officials who asked not to be named.

A cluster of structures erected by the Chinese above the reef was also still there, the officials said.

It was not clear whether the seven vessels which had left would return. Aerial reconnaissance showed the ships had left by Thursday morning and had not returned Saturday afternoon, they said.

Ramos goes into elections with little opposition

MANILA (Agencies) — Three months from national elections, an alliance negotiated by President Fidel Ramos with the main opposition may return the Philippines to a virtual one party system.

The May 8 elections will be for 205 deputies and 12 of the 24 senators. There will also be local voting for governors, mayors and their assistants.

Mr. Ramos is halfway through his six-year term. He won the 1992 election by only 23 votes. But the May elections could see Mr. Ramos get a larger powerbase in the country and increase his control over Congress, helping to speed up economic reforms to prepare for the next presidential term.

Opponents of Mr. Ramos, who was dictator Ferdinand Marcos' chief of staff before turning against him in 1986, accuse the ex-general of backing a bill to change the constitution so he could remain in power beyond 1998.

Under current law, Mr. Ramos cannot be re-elected. In a system where clan clash and ideologies and programmes count for little, Mr. Ramos has, in a master stroke, forged an alliance between his party, Lakas, which will take care of 90 per cent of the campaign expenses, and the main opposition party, Laban.

The Senate candidates had been appointed at the beginning of the month, just before the campaign began. Hagglers over the list of deputy candidates is to finish before the end of March.

Launching his campaign last week, the head of the opposition Nationalist People's Coalition (NPC), Senator Ernesto Maceda, said the perception that "we need an opposition party in this country" to criticise the ruling

Angolan rebel congress confirms peace pact after Savimbi intervention

LISBON (AP) — The national congress of Angola's rebel movement overruled military hardliners Saturday by confirming its acceptance of peace accords to end the civil war.

The rebel UNITA's Radio Vorgan said 2,000 delegates meeting in the central Angolan town of Bailundo approved 21 resolutions backing the peace deal signed November in Lusaka, Zambia, and welcoming the impending dispatch of 7,000 U.N. peacekeepers.

But the radio, monitored by Portugal's news agency (LUSA), said military hardliners in rebel ranks had gone along with the plan only after "decisive persuasion" from rebel UNITA chief Jonas Savimbi.

The rebel military brass, still smarting from military setbacks at the hands of government troops last fall, spoke out Friday for rejection of the accords and a return to war.

The truce that followed the accords has been tenuous but many observers judged Friday's belligerent stance to be mostly political bluff.

UNITA, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, has never been militarily weaker and the accords, while not perfect for UNITA, offer the possibility of power-sharing with the government.

Angola's 19-year war erupted on the eve of independence from Portugal in 1975 and has killed a half-million Angolans. Millions more are left threatened by starvation and disease.

The U.N.-brokered accords have eased fighting but both sides have said the truce can only be cemented by blue-helmeted U.N. troops. The Security Council approved the 7,000-strong force last week but did not

say when troops could start arriving in Angola.

Announcing the eighth national congress' decisions on rebel Radio Vorgan, top UNITA General Paulo Lukumba Gato also said delegates had approved a meeting between Mr. Savimbi and Angolan President Jose Eduardo Dos Santos but gave no date nor venue.

He also said UNITA was willing to participate in a transitional government but that if "a shared platform" could not be agreed, the rebels would prefer to go into opposition.

The congress voted to expel all UNITA members who had agreed to enter the National Assembly in the capital, Luanda, and demand the readmission of other deputies who had remained loyal to the leadership.

The rebels consider the Assembly government controlled.

instrumental in turning the tide that led to the ouster of then-President Ferdinand Marcos and catapulted Corason Aquino to power.

Card. Sin said he decided to call for public support to stop a massacre after Mr. Marcos ordered an attack on some 172 rebel soldiers, headed by then Lt. Gen. Fidel Ramos and Defence Secretary Juan Ponce Enrile, who were holed up at the National Police Headquarters.

"Mr. Ramos won the presidency after a closely fought election in 1992.

"It is a problem of life and death. That was why I got involved, but (my) involvement turned out to be political because (Marcos) was driven away. But it was not really our intention to engage in politics. My intention was the protection of life."

However, Card. Sin said his criticisms are not always welcomed. He has had several disagreements with Mr. Ramos, the country's first Protestant leader, including on the issues of family planning and the use of contraceptives.

"I have been making resolutions to keep quiet, but sometimes my tongue is itching and I have to speak out."

Also, Card. Sin said last month's visit to Pope John Paul II in the Philippines has helped revive the enthusiasm of the country's Catholic majority.

"The church is flourishing. The church is becoming stronger everyday," he said. About 85 per cent of the Philippines' 66 million people are Catholic.

Card. Sin said the Pope's visit to many countries is helping the church gain adherents.



Peruvian commandos wait at the El Milagro army fort in the Department of Amazonas for deployment to a combat zone at the border with Ecuador (AFP photo)

Fierce Bihac fighting 'endangers truce'

SARAJEVO (AFP) — Fierce fighting in the Bihac region over the last few days threatens to undermine the fragile ceasefire in Bosnia, a spokesman for United Nations peacekeepers said Sunday.

The commander of Bosnian forces, General Rasim Delic, meanwhile, accused U.N. forces of failing to meet their commitments under the six-week-old ceasefire. In a letter to General Rupert Smith, commander of the U.N. Protection Force, Gen. Delic said he would boycott peace talks scheduled for next Wednesday.

At least one person was killed and several were wounded Saturday during artillery battles in Bosnia's northwest Bihac enclave.

The fighting put new pressure on the Dec. 24 ceasefire, which has generally held elsewhere in the former Yugoslav republic since going into effect Dec. 31.

The U.N. spokesman, Major Herve Gourmelon, said the recent clashes pitting Bosnian government forces

against Bosnian Serbs and secessionist Muslims "endanger the ceasefire and the peace process."

He said the U.N. had not been able to tell who was to blame for fierce fighting Saturday between Bosnian government forces and Bosnian Serbs in the area of Bosanska Krupa, a Serb-held town east of Bihac.

Those clashes followed artillery battles for control of water supplies to Bihac and fighting around Velika Kladusa, headquarters of the secessionist Muslim leader Fikret Abdic, whose forces are backed by Croatian Serbs.

Gen. Gourmelon said U.N. staff recorded about 1,500 incidents of gun, mortar and tank fire during the fighting Saturday.

According to local Bosnian sources cited by the United Nations, Mr. Abdic's forces launched two battalion-level attacks Saturday south and east of Velika Kladusa. The town was recaptured in December by Mr. Abdic's

forces, which had abandoned it in August to Bosnian government troops.

In the Bosanska Krupa region, near the village of Coljak, Serb forces launched an infantry attack, U.N. spokesman said, quoting local Bosnian forces, Muslim-led government forces tried to capture Bosanska Krupa last fall, but the Serbs gradually pushed combat lines to within a few kilometres of the town.

The attacks follow several days of fighting in southern Bihac, in the Zegar and Vedro Polje area, where Serbs have been trying to recapture territory lost during a Bosnian army offensive on Jan. 13 and 14.

In his letter to the U.N. Protection Force (UNPROFOR) command, Gen. Delic complained about the fighting and said he would not participate in a U.N.-sponsored meeting with his Bosnian Serb and Croatian counterparts Wednesday. He blamed both the U.N. forces and Bosnian Serbs for the worsening tensions.

Party row over Europe may engulf Major

LONDON (R) — Can John Major's government survive until the next general election?

The British prime minister has defied the odds many times before. But after a week of infighting over Europe that was extraordinary even by the standards of his ruling Conservatives, political observers are wondering how long he can stagger on.

"If and when historians chronicle the strange death of Tory Britain, they may cite this week as the one which sealed its fate," the Economist, a highly respected weekly newspaper, said.

"Before, the government seemed doomed if it could not resolve its decisions on Europe. Afterwards, it seemed doomed never to resolve them," it added.

The Conservatives' debate over Europe often seems abusive, especially when it gets bogged down, as now, in nuances over whether Britain's participation in a future single currency would have "constitutional" or merely "political" consequences.

The Conservatives are renowned for their instincts of self-preservation. But some admit privately their divisions over Europe may run so deep that the party will split over it.

Fujimori warns of 'dangerous' escalation in fighting with Ecuador

Ecuador jets shoot down 3 Peruvian planes

LIMA (AFP) — Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori has warned that border fighting with Ecuador had reached "dangerous" levels after at least three warplanes were shot down by Ecuadorian troops.

Mr. Fujimori, speaking at his first news conference with foreign correspondents on the conflict, said Ecuadorian troops shot down late Friday three planes with artillery recently moved to the combat zone.

"This is a dangerous escalation that Peru is attempting to avoid through all legal means," said Mr. Fujimori during the 90-minute conference.

He said Ecuadorian troops shot down two Russian-built Sukhoi-22 fighter bombers and an A-37 U.S.-made Dragonfly ground attack plane, and reported that a helicopter was "missing."

The air combat occurred as Ecuadorian President Sixto Duran Ballen asked former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and former Costa Rican president Oscar Arias to mediate a ceasefire.

In San Jose, Mr. Arias said he had telephoned Carter earlier in the day to discuss

the appeal but stressed that he would not undertake the mediation effort unless Peru was in full agreement.

Carrie Harmon, a spokeswoman for the Carter Centre in Atlanta, Georgia, said the former president "has indicated he was prepared to consider getting involved."

Mr. Duran Ballen said earlier this week that the two statesmen might attempt to end the fighting sparked by a decades-old dispute over an unmarked stretch of border in the Cordillera del Condor region.

The border between the two nations was defined in the 1942 Rio Protocol but demarcation of the frontier in the remote jungle area has remained a bone of contention.

An Ecuadorian air defence official meanwhile was quoted in the newspaper El Universo De Guayaquil as saying that its Mirage F1-C fighter planes had shot down three Sukhoi bombers and an A-37 Dragonfly ground attack plane from Peru.

"The fighting lasted five minutes and Ecuadorian fighter planes managed to quickly intercept the enemies and

position themselves, firing several rockets," the newspaper said.

The guarantors of the 1942 Rio Protocol — the United States, Argentina, Brazil and Chile — held two rounds of talks Saturday in Brasilia that yielded no results, Ecuadorian Deputy Foreign Minister Marcelo Fernandez De Cordoba said.

"Things are no better because we still have not reached a ceasefire," said Mr. Fernandez De Cordoba. A Brazilian official said informal talks would continue throughout the weekend.

Mr. Fujimori said that 36 Peruvian soldiers have been killed and 60 wounded since fighting began. He said that two Peruvian soldiers were wounded in fighting Saturday in the hills surrounding Tiwinza and claimed Ecuador lost six soldiers.

In Quito, Ecuadorian Defence Minister Jose Gallardo, meanwhile, set the casualty toll on his side at nine dead with 34 wounded.

"Our forces are resisting and have not lost one centimetre" of territory, Mr. Gallardo told a news conference.

In the combat zone in Ecuador, two soldiers reported missing showed up alive and were taken to a hospital for treatment of wounds. Red Cross officials in the zone said Ecuador had four Peruvian prisoners.

Mr. Fujimori meanwhile dismissed suggestions that the fighting was related to the April 9 presidential poll and said the elections would be held even if the conflict remained unresolved.

There have been suggestions that the Peruvian leader hoped to distract attention from domestic issues and boost his authority by seizing the disputed territory.

Peru also announced plans Saturday to dispatch a commission of 17 people — historians, lawyers, businessmen, diplomats, politicians and journalists — to counter what they claimed was Ecuador's "disinformation" campaign.

The envoys were to hold meetings with foreign governments to win support for Peru's territorial claims.

Meanwhile, former U.S. President Carter said Saturday he is prepared to mediate in the conflict between Peru and Ecuador if both countries request it.

Rangoon troops step up bombardment of Karen camp

MAE SOT, Thailand (AFP) — Burmese troops Sunday stepped up their artillery bombardment of the Karen guerrillas' last stronghold on the border with Thailand.

And with the last remaining Burmese rebel group determined to defend Kawmoora camp "to the death," diplomats and military experts say the Rangoon military junta risks paying a heavy material and political price for the assault.

Intense shelling on the Karen National Union (KNU) camp at Kawmoora began Saturday night. Government artillery fired a round a minute for 90 minutes, a border source said. Small arms fire backed up the barrage.

The attack resumed before dawn Sunday with artillery bursts heard clearly just across the border in the Thai town of Mae Sot.

Kawmoora, a camp on the Moei River surrounded on three sides by Thai territory, is the last major base of the Karen rebels, who have

fought successive Rangoon regimes for autonomy since 1948.

It came under intense attack again in late January when Burma's ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) launched a concerted campaign to end ethnic Karen resistance.

Government troops have attempted to take Kawmoora four times since 1989 but have never passed the "killing place" — the narrow entrance to the camp which is mined, booby-trapped and layered with barbed wire.

On Saturday a KNU fighter said 72 government soldiers were killed when they walked into a trap of fishing nets. Their bodies would remain hoisted in the air to warn off other SLORC attacks he said.

KNU sources expected a strong ground assault Sunday. SLORC attacks have varied in intensity on alternate days. KNU sources said the government forces were dependent on porters to bring in munitions on foot.

The pre-dawn shelling Sunday across the Moei River woke residents of Mae Sot, but the only sign of concern was the hurried departure in the early hours of two vans loaded of nervous ethnic Chinese tourists.

Government forces have already lost at least 130 men in the Kawmoora siege while the rebels put their death toll at just six. And experts say taking the stronghold could take many days, if not weeks.

One Western diplomat in Bangkok said the Burmese government could lose several hundred troops in the battle while at the same time seeing its credibility take a new battering.

Burma has already faced international criticism by ending its ceasefire with the Karens. Even Thailand, which led attempts for a "constructive engagement" with Rangoon, has been angered. A Burmese attempt to get at Kawmoora through Thailand last week was fought off and Thai territory is sporadically hit by Burmese shells.

The junta won an important victory when it took the Karen headquarters at Manerplaw on Jan. 27. But the strongarm tactics there and at Kawmoora could just force the ethnic Karens back into a guerrilla war in which they are proven experts.

It could also make other opposition groups, such as the National League of Democracy, led by detained Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, more radical.

senior U.N. official in Bangkok said that the timing of the government offensive, to coincide with a visit to Rangoon by U.N. human rights envoys Alvarez De Soto and Francesco Vendrell, "had been seen as a slap in the face" for the United Nations.

Potential investors will "think twice" about Burmese approaches, said a diplomat. A planned gas pipeline between Burma and Thailand is already a declared target for Karen and student guerrillas.

Mandela steps into Winnie row

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — President Nelson Mandela went into talks Sunday on the latest crisis involving his estranged wife Winnie, a revolt by the executive of the African National Congress (ANC) Women's League, which she heads, a presidential spokesman said.

Mr. Mandela was meeting the League's leadership at a hotel here to discuss the mass resignation in the past two days of 11 senior members in protest against Winnie's leadership, spokesman Parks Mankahlama said.

Mr. Mankahlama declined to give details about the talk or about Sunday newspaper reports that Mandela has asked Winnie, who is also deputy minister of arts, culture, science and technology, to withdraw remarks critical of his government or quit.

The Sunday Times said Mr. Mandela instructed Deputy President Thabo Mbeki to hold a meeting with Winnie Friday, in which she was told to retract her criticisms, resign or be fired from the government.

Mr. Mankahlama admitted that Mandela had been unhappy over Winnie's comments and had consulted with Mr. Mbeki, but a public

statement would only be issued later in the week.

Winnie Mandela said at the funeral of a black police officer slain by white colleagues during a strike by black officers that the government had failed South Africans because it had not addressed racism in the workplace.

She told the crowd at last Sunday's funeral that the ANC "over-indulgence" in reconciliation was a weakness.

Winnie has yet to respond to the reports.

She failed to attend the Women's League meeting Saturday when 10 senior members, including Health Minister Nkosazana Zuma, resigned, joining veteran anti-apartheid activist Adelaide Tambo, who quit Friday.

The resignations from the influential body were in protest over a tourism venture between Mr. Mandela and actor Omar Sharif.

They cited Mrs. Mandela's "undemocratic behaviour" in going ahead with the scheme despite objections from the Women's League executive.

Mrs. Mandela and Mr. Sharif have launched a company called "The Road to Freedom," which plans to bring tourists, particularly

black Americans, to South Africa to visit sites pertaining to the liberation struggle, including prisons and the birthplace of Nelson Mandela.

The Women's League plays an important role within the ruling ANC, often influencing policy decisions and the selection of leaders.

The league has been severely split since Mrs. Mandela was elected president in 1993, with the Sunday Times reporting that five of those members of the executive who did not resign Saturday have been made trustees of Mrs. Mandela's tourism project.

Mrs. Mandela is often involved in controversies, recent ones including her suing a soft-porn magazine for labelling her "Asshole of the Month," and her being sued for non-payment of a charter flight to Angola.

Mrs. Mandela was also convicted for the 1989 kidnapping of a 14-year-old boy, who was subsequently murdered by her bodyguard, but her six-year jail sentence was reduced on appeal to a fine.

Her marriage to Mr. Mandela broke down in 1991 following allegations of an affair between her and a young lawyer.

Bangladesh police battle strikers

DHAKA (Agencies) — More than 100 people were injured when police used rubber bullets and tear gas in battles with striking Bangladeshi workers Sunday, witnesses said.

Nearly 100,000 workers in jute and textile mills privatised over the past two years called the 96-hour strike and a countrywide transport blockade to press demands for higher wages and job security.

The strikers halted trains and inter-city buses across the country, police said. They said some policemen were hurt in sporadic fighting.

The fiercest clashes took place near a mill on the outskirts of Dhaka, where workers barricaded a road, pelted police with stones and attacked vehicles.

Police later charged hundreds of workers marching across a nearby bridge, forcing many to jump into the river below.

"Dozens were forced to dive into the river 70 feet (21 metres) below while others put up a strong fight with police," one witness told Reuters. Some were hurt diving into the water and were taken to hospital, he said.

Government officials said attempts to avert the stoppage failed because of "insincerity and apathy" by some trade union leaders and employers. They gave no details.

Clashes were also reported from the southern district of Chittagong where workers damaged a train and set up many roadblocks, police said.

At Adamjee Nagar near Dhaka, thousands of factory workers overpowered police and took control of a road linking the capital to south-eastern districts.

The workers said employers had failed to keep promises to increase salaries and give adequate compensation for job losses due to privatisation.

More than 20,000 jute mill workers lost jobs during privatisation but many of them say they have not yet received promised compensation.

The minimum monthly wage of an industrial labourer recommended by a wage commission — representing the government, private employers and trade unions — is 1,493 taka (\$37.32), fixed in 1991.

But the minimum wage was honoured only in public

sector mills, said Abul Bashar, leader of the Workers' Action Committee, Sunday.

"Besides demanding implementation of the higher pay in private factories, we are now asking for a 30 per cent additional rise to meet the soaring cost of living," he said.

Meanwhile, two students were killed and 30 injured Sunday in fierce clashes between rival groups who used guns and crude bombs in western Bangladesh's Rajshahi University, student sources said.

The sources said the two were killed when activists from the Janiyatabadi Chitra Dal (JCD) and Islami Chitra Shibir (ICS) clashed over supremacy on the campus.

University officials or local police could not be reached immediately for confirmation.

News reports earlier said the two sides also clashed Saturday and most students fled the campus.

JCD is the student wing of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and ICS belongs to the Muslim fundamentalist Jamaat-E-Islami Party.

Hunger, sickness, despair stalk Chechenya cellar children

ARGUN, Russia (AFP) — The cellar children of Argun hardly flinched as the Russian artillery shells boomed overhead, but their pinched, pale faces spoke of hunger, sickness and despair.

Dozens of children, from babies to mid-teens, live in a dark, dank factory cellar in this battered town on the front line between Russian and Chechen forces.

The lucky ones have mothers or grandmothers with them — haggard women who said they were reaching the end of their tether.

Khadizhat Matuyeva, 63, said she had been down in the cellar for two months with 10 grandchildren from one son and five from another. The youngest is aged three.

Her Argun home was destroyed by Russian shells and she had no idea whether the children's fathers were still alive. "We have no place to go. I don't know what to do," she said.

She could not let her grandchildren go up outside to play because "there's a war going on out there."

Russian and Chechen forces have been facing off at Argun, about 20 kilometres (12 miles) east of the Chechen capital of Grozny, since December.

Russian forces across the Argun river to the north and east of the city have bombed and shelled the town constantly for the last six weeks.

The attacks have been stepped up over the past week, as Chechen rebels withdrawing from a Russian onslaught in Grozny made their way here to defend Argun.

The town has become an urban wasteland, with bombed-out buildings everywhere. There is little life in the streets except for soldiers and dogs.

But suddenly around a corner were several children playing in a parking lot. They were cellar children, coming up for air.

Argun officials said that about 300 people lived in the



A Chechen boy stands next to an armed man at a Chechen check point near Samashki (AFP photo)

cellar underneath what used to be a machine tool factory, and hundreds more crowded in at night when the Russian shelling became most intense.

The dozens of children in the cellar, one of many such shelters in Argun and Grozny, catch the eye, but not the ear. They are eerily quiet, and laughter is rare.

A few lights fed by a generator pierce the gloom. The cellar, which measures about 50 metres by 30, smells like a medieval dungeon with bad sewage.

Stacked cots line one side of the cavern. There are small dormitory rooms giving off the other sides. Their concrete floors are covered with water which the women mop up ceaselessly.

The toilet is nothing more than one of these rooms. To use it, you slop your way across rickety planks.

One wondered if the place is rat-infested. "Rats? What kind of rats? There's nothing to eat down here," was the

quick reply.

Rada Ibrahimova, 32, is the mother of three boys aged 15, 10 and eight, and a girl aged 12. They have also been here for two months.

What do the children do with their days? It is a stupid question. "They get sick. What else is there for them to do?"

Ms. Ibrahimova has been a widow for six years. Life had been hard. "But I had an apartment, I had a job, I fed the kids," she said — until the Russians bombed her apartment block on the 15th birthday of her son, Zamilkhan.

"Russia took away their childhood," an old man said. Ms. Ibrahimova added: "I'm exhausted. I cannot find words. One woman here went crazy and got sick when they started bombing. She died like a dog. She had no funeral."

Feeding the cellar people — the children, the women, the old folk — is becoming more and more difficult.

Despite the shelling, some of them creep back to their homes in above-ground Argun during the day and bring back whatever they can.

Then they go to a local street market outside the town and trade for food.

There used to be a grain elevator above-ground with wheat that could be turned into flour and bread.

But the elevator was bombed and destroyed two days ago, an Argun official said. So bread is running out. Sometimes the Chechen fighters above ground bring down some food.

Zoya Kanayeva, 27, a refugee from Grozny, managed to feed her two children aged five and three a cup of tea and some bread this morning. For supper, perhaps there would be some macaroni or rice.

She pointed to her son, dressed in little overalls. "He has nothing else to wear. All our clothes were destroyed when the house was

bombed," Ms. Kanayeva said.

Many of the cellar people are ill. Aslan Daudov, 24, is a haemophiliac who said he cannot get the treatment he needs and lives underground in constant fear for his life. He said there are also cancer sufferers down here.

The children are malnourished and lice-infested. Their faces have scabs. Colds, influenza and fevers are common.

Zaur Muslyuyev, the head doctor at the hospital in neighbouring Shali, said that the cold, unheated cellars in Argun and other communities were breeding grounds for influenza and gastrointestinal infections.

But the worst may be yet to come. After mid-March, when the weather turns warmer, cholera could strike the cellar people, he warned.

Mussa Khokiev, commander of a Chechen battalion defending Argun, said on leaving the cellar: "Better to die than to live like that."

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When signatures don't count

YESTERDAY's five-way meeting in Washington of the foreign ministers of Egypt, Jordan, Israel and the PLO to end the deadlock on the Israeli-Palestinian track was held amid ominous signs that the entire Oslo accord was on the verge of collapse if no serious effort was made to rescue it. The gravity of the situation on the Palestinian front has prompted President Bill Clinton to attend the opening session of the meeting in a renewed bid to breathe new life into the almost defunct Israeli-Palestinian National Authority (PNA) peace talks. But what could be at stake too is the entire peace process, as Osama Baz, President Mubarak's adviser, rightly pointed out on Saturday.

The crux of the problem on the Palestinian-Israeli track transcends the issue of holding the Palestinian elections on time or the so-called redeployment of the Israeli troops in preparation for these polls. It also goes beyond the security concerns of Israel and the wave of violent acts perpetrated by extremists. The central issue here is whether in fact Israel under the leadership of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has the necessary political will to move forward the peace negotiations with the Palestinian side on the matter that counts most: withdrawal from the occupied territories and handing over authority and control to the PNA in due course. This is the bottom line which Rabin is hoping to delay, for as long as he can, out of fear for his political life.

It must be remembered that Palestinian violence and counter Israeli violence have preceded the Oslo accord. So, regrettable as the continuation of this wave of violence indeed is, it cannot be construed as the principal obstacle to progress, although it no doubt has a tremendous negative effect on public opinion on both sides of the fence.

What is also particularly troubling is the notion being advanced by some Israeli officials suggesting that there is a possibility of turning back on the Oslo agreement. Israeli Minister of Health Ephraim Sneh insinuated Saturday on Israel Radio that the Oslo accord is not sacrosanct and could be repudiated by his country at will. When challenged that the non-deployment of the Israeli army on the eve of the Palestinian elections would violate the Oslo accord, Mr. Sneh not only answered in the affirmative but added that contravening the agreement with the Palestinians was necessary, in this particular regard.

Now if the peace agreements that Israel freely negotiated and ratified with the PNA are not sacred, then what is? This shifting stance would suggest that nothing Israel commits itself to can be depended on for all times. Israel has always suggested that Arab signatures cannot be counted on. Now it seems the opposite is true.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

IN DEFENCE of the Palestinians and the whole Arab Nation, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has announced that he was not ready to implement the Oslo agreement, which calls for Israeli forces' pull-out from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, said Al Ra'i Arabic daily Sunday. With this attitude, said the paper, Mr. Rabin has created a crisis and caused a deadlock in the peace process. The official spokesman of the Palestine National Authority (PNA) has declared openly that Mr. Rabin's government is placing obstacles in the path of peace by refusing to implement its agreements with the Palestinians and by dragging its feet on the question of holding elections and giving the Palestine authority wider powers in the Palestinian territory. It seems that Israel is using the continued Arab resistance against the occupation as an excuse to perpetuate its occupation of Arab land and beef up the Jewish settlements, something which can by no means contribute to the establishment of stability, security and peace in the region, said the paper.

COMMENTING ON the Arab-Israeli-American meeting in Washington Sunday, a writer in Al Ra'i daily said it was clear that the parley was a follow up to the Cairo Arab-Israeli summit. However, the Washington meeting assumes a new dimension since it is being held under the auspices of the United States, which has long considered itself as a full partner in the peace making process, said Mahmoud Rimawi. It is also clear that Jordan and Egypt are participating in the meeting for the purpose of pressuring Israel into honouring its commitments towards peace and implementing the Oslo and Cairo agreements, he said. The writer said Washington's bid to achieve peace in the Middle East ought to be translated into facts on the ground because the mere signing of peace treaties and agreements would remain ink on paper unless Israel took steps towards their implementation.

Human Rights File

Russia's 'crimes against humanity'

THERE ARE many voices which describe what has occurred in Chechnya at the hands of Russian troops as genocide. The indiscriminate shelling and use of cluster bombs to inflict the maximum number of casualties among the Chechen people have been constantly regarded as tantamount to crimes against humanity and war crimes under the relevant Geneva conventions and the two protocols of the 4th Geneva Convention. What is disturbing is the silence of the "civilised" world and Moscow's interpretation of this silence as a license to go ahead with its war effort to bring the Chechens down to their knees. What is even ominous is the probable interpretation of the combined events in Bosnia and Chechnya by the Islamic peoples as a war against Islam. The most pressing issue here, therefore, is whether the "slaughter" of so many Muslims before the eyes of the champions of democracy and human rights would fuel even more extremism among Muslims everywhere.

There is no denying that the repeated mistreatment of Muslims in Europe and in the Caucasus region would leave a deep imprint on the Islamic national psyche and may end up triggering a belief that Muslims are being targeted by a coalition of advanced states. I personally don't share this conviction but I doubt that the majority of the Islamic

World would share my sense of optimism. The majority would prefer to jump into the conclusion that there is an international conspiracy against Islam. The fact that many international and regional conferences have been held for the specific purpose of gauging the so-called Islamic danger ended-up lending support to the fears and anxieties of the Muslim nation that it is being targeted as the number one enemy that replaced the communist threat.

There were many other former republics that were part and parcel of former Soviet Union whose decision to opt out of the U.S.S.R. was indeed conducted in an orderly and humanely fashion and was accepted by Moscow. The Baltic states offer a perfect example of how the former Soviet Union was transformed into a freely negotiated alliance of former members of the U.S.S.R. without the resort to force. Why can the Baltic countries or even Ukraine, it is often being asked, be free to go their separate ways and Chechnya be denied the same right?

The only obvious explanation for this differential treatment would readily be construed by fanatics as additional evidence that there is an international consensus to keep the Islamic tide checked. This is what Moscow and the major capitals of the world have refused to take into

consideration in dealing with Bosnia and Chechnya.

This geopolitical assessment by the Islamic World of the recent events affecting them could in fact propel further extremism among the Muslims of the international community. Moscow would most probably succeed in subduing Chechnya but such a feat could end up planting the seeds for a wider conflict. The thousands that have lost their lives over the battle for Grozny will surely haunt humanity for many decades, just like the thousands who were killed in the Bosnian conflict.

The near total destruction of Grozny in order to occupy it cannot but have far reaching implications. This makes the Russian military success a very shallow political, social and cultural victory.

From a human rights perspective, the Russian handling of the situation in Chechnya can only draw fire from many sides on the occasion of the convening of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in Geneva this month. Like wise, Moscow will have to explain its conduct before the Human Rights Committee on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The jurisprudence of the committee on the right of peoples to exercise self-determination is too clear to be ignored by any country matter how powerful it may be.

By Waleed Sa'di

Weary of war, but ready for peace?

By Alison Smale

The Associated Press
VIENNA — Almost four years into the bloodshed that ripped apart the old Yugoslavia, combatants and their foreign counsellors stand on the brink of peace — or total war.

In coming weeks, mediators either will be able to build on brittle truces in Bosnia and Croatia, or watch war engulf both simultaneously for the first time since fighting started between Serbs and Croats in spring 1991.

War in both states would produce a military and political tangle more complex than the conflicts that so far have defied solution. It almost certainly would mean withdrawal of tens of thousands of U.N. peacekeepers in a hazardous operation backed by U.S. and other NATO troops. It also could mean conflict spreading to other parts of the volatile Balkans.

Outsiders — especially the United States — are pressuring local leaders in a scramble to avoid such a nightmare. In both Bosnia and Croatia, Washington is signalling that there can be no final settlement without the support of the Serb minorities.

This has angered Bosnia's Muslim-led government. Yet Washington is simultaneously trying to shore up the government's troubled federation with Bosnia's Croats to make sure the Serbs don't get, or take, too much.

In Croatia, Washington is a key player in foreign

efforts to prevent a new Serb-Croat war if President Franjo Tudjman insists that 12,000 U.N. peacekeepers leave when their mandate ends on March 31.

Local leaders also are putting out feelers for peace — approaches that France wants to explore at a European conference attended by leaders of Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia.

But almost four years of fighting creates their own logic.

The aggressive nationalism of Mr. Tudjman and Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic launched the war.

Bosnia's Muslims, the biggest losers, put no faith in outside powers to regain land for them. They have some trust in their army, now better equipped and trained than at the outset of Bosnia's war in 1992.

They stoked deep fears and persuaded Serbs and Croats that ties of blood counted for more than decades of coexistence.

Many people who have lost homes, loved ones and livelihoods in the name of nationalism are weary of war, but see little incentive in peace.

Bosnia's Muslims, the biggest losers, put no faith in outside powers to regain land for them. They have some trust in their army, now better equipped and trained than at the outset of Bosnia's war in 1992.

Travellers to central Bosnia report preparations for

more war when a four-month truce runs out May 1.

In Croatia, the U.N.-patrolled ceasefire that ended six months of Serb-Croat war in January 1992 still holds.

But Mr. Tudjman insists the United Nations get out, because it has frozen Serb domination of one-third of Croatia while doing nothing to disarm the Serbs or return Croat refugees to their homes.

On Friday, Mr. Tudjman again sought to reassure the world and his own people. "There will be no war, but

there might be isolated incidents," he said.

Croatia's Serbs, however, already have cut off all tenuous economic and other ties painstakingly negotiated with Mr. Tudjman in the past few months. They will fight if attacked, and have a promise of support from the Serbs in neighbouring Bosnia.

Already in Bihac, Bosnia's northwestern tip, Serbs from Bosnia and Croatia are making common cause. Those battles have defied hopeful signs elsewhere in Bosnia, such as the opening of roads in and out of besieged

Sarajevo.

In contrast to his fighting rhetoric of 1991, Mr. Tudjman does not sound like a man preparing for war. Instead, he and his close aides suggest they hope for recognition from Mr. Milosevic.

The Serbian president, characteristically, is silent. Mr. Milosevic clearly is not anxious to help either the Croatian or Bosnian Serbs whom he incited and bankrolled into war. He now would like to end international sanctions imposed for fomenting that war.

A Milosevic-Tudjman deal is widely rumoured.

Diplomats might coax Mr. Tudjman into extending the U.N. mandate, or accepting some different international presence. Mr. Milosevic would recognise Croatia.

The world would lift sanctions on Serbia, and persuade Mr. Tudjman and the Croatian Serbs to accept an international plan whereby the Serbs handed back some territory to, hated Zagreb, in exchange for autonomy — not independence — for the rest.

Even if outsiders could pull off such a diplomatic coup, Bosnia would remain at war. Any Milosevic-Tudjman deal would revive the Muslim-led government's fears that the Croats and Serbs, with the world's connivance, simply will divide Bosnia between them.

As it marks the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II, Europe cannot afford too much self-congratulation. It must brace for more war in its midst.

Nelson Mandela rises above popular mythology

By Brendan Boyle
Reuters

CAPE TOWN — Friend and foe agree: in the five years since Nelson Mandela's release from jail he has outshone the mythology that made him the world's most famous political prisoner.

Through four years of democracy talks and almost a year as South Africa's first black president, Mr. Mandela, 76, has held together a nation divided by centuries of white domination and the legacy of four decades of apartheid.

On Friday, he led 1,300 former political detainees on a pilgrimage to the Robben Island prison off Cape Town five years after his release from jail. He spent 18 of his 27 years in prison on the island for his anti-apartheid struggle.

Mr. Mandela has combined old-world charm, an iron will and total self-discipline to reassure most whites that democracy is no threat to them and to persuade most blacks to wait for the final elimination of apartheid backlogs.

Even the white Afrikaners who kept him in jail for 27 years for fighting white rule hail him as something close to a saint.

"If President Mandela, because of his age or illness or other reasons, suddenly vacated the position, there will be a shudder through

the international community and South Africa, former president F.W. de Klerk told a business lunch in Sydney this week.

Mr. De Klerk, who took the decision to dismantle apartheid and free Mr. Mandela in February 1990, added: "...It might be that his successor might not keep the divergent elements inside the (African National Congress) ANC together."

Constand Viljoen, who headed apartheid's armed forces for five years until 1985 and now leads the white-separatist Freedom Front, proposed recently that the anniversary of Mr. Mandela's inauguration should be marked as a national day of reconciliation.

Eugene Terre Blanche, the militant neo-Nazi leader who vowed two years ago he would negotiate with Mr. Mandela only over the barrel of a gun, has accepted black rule and called recently for an amnesty for right-wing political crimes linked to the "historic" inauguration of President Mandela.

"He is an instinctive unifier," said former ANC youth League activist Parks Mankahlana, now one of Mr. Mandela's aides.

"It is in his nature to reach out to everyone, even the most junior member of staff, with a gesture of encouragement."

Political colleagues add,

however, that Mr. Mandela, who repudiated his heritage as a clan chief became one of South Africa's first black lawyers, can be infuriatingly stubborn and is formidable when crossed.

"He is a very difficult fellow to deal with when he is irritated and when he has made up his mind it is very difficult to change," said a member of his staff.

Mr. Mandela showed the steely side of his nature recently when he rebuked black civil servants growing impatient with the pace of change from white domination of the public service.

"My patience is not unlimited and I am losing patience," he told reporters at the end of the day.

Friends say Mr. Mandela has continued his prison routine since his release from a mainland jail near Cape Town on Feb. 11, 1990, rising at 4:30 every morning for an hour-long walk in his garden or through the suburban streets around his Johannesburg home. He was moved from Robben Island in 1982.

Discounting regular market rumours that he is suffering a terminal illness, Mr. Mankahlana said that although Mr. Mandela was increasingly stiff at the knees and watery-eyed, his health remained good.

"Apart from his eyes, he is in excellent health for a man of his age," he said in a

reference to Mr. Mandela's leaky tendons, damaged by years of work in a Robben Island lime quarry.

"He can read without glasses, but bright lights make his pupils close up tight and that is painful," he said.

Mr. Mandela has caused market flutters several times when his two military doctors have suddenly ordered him to cut his intense schedule.

One of his doctors travels with him when he is away from home and often joins him on his morning walks, but officials insist Mr. Mandela's ailments are only those of age.

Mr. Mandela seldom refers in public to the hardships of his life, which, apart from imprisonment, have included the death in a car accident of an adult son, the collapse of two marriages and a bout with tuberculosis.

Friends say he still grieves for the failure of his marriage to Winnie, now a deputy minister in his cabinet and, as a revered leader of the left fringe of his party, a potential rival for power.

They say his closest friend and confidant is former cellmate Ahmed Kathrada and his main political adviser is Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, the son of former prison colleague Govan Mbeki, and the man favoured to succeed him.

Revolutions that failed

By G. H. Jansen

THE IRANISANS issued a rather grandiloquent invitation when, earlier this month, people were requested "to celebrate the 16th anniversary of the victorious Iranian Revolution." Victorious, when anyone acquainted with Iran today knows all-too-well that the Islamic revolution has failed and is still failing.

All that can be said in extenuation of the pathetic Iranian claim is that two other revolutions have failed in the past 25 years and for the very same reason as the Iranian failure. These are the Gandhian Rasthaya revolution in India and the Communist revolution in Eastern Europe, and, consequently, the world over.

The similar cause in all three cases was that the founders of the revolutions misjudged the national character by having too exalted an opinion of the character of their fellow citizens and therefore having unrealistic expectations of how the people would react to the revolution. This was based on the conviction that it is universally true that "we need love the highest when we see it," which is not at all true of the average human being.

Thus, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, perhaps because he had spent his adult life in the cloistered isolation of the theological seminaries in Qom and Najaf in Iraq, was convinced that Iranians were far better, more sincere and more dedicated Muslims than they actually were. Which is not to say that the average Iranian Muslim is not, generally speaking, a devout Muslim. The Iranians are a devout people, devout enough to die for the faith as was seen during the Shah's attempted violent repression of the "revolution" in the months preceding his victory when the Ayatollah returned in triumph from exile in France.

However, the revolution then decreed and still decrees no drinking or smoking, which could be found in any reformist movement. But it also decreed no secular music, no poetry and only "improving" films and literature. Plus, of course, women are covered-up from forehead to ankle.

These "reforms" were particularly resented by Iranians, who have shown all through their long history, not least under Muslim rulers, that they are a sensitive and imaginative, not to say sensuous, people, as witnessed in their splendid and colourful mosques and in their beautiful and colourful carpets. Persian poetry and Persian painting, in the miniatures, are full of the enjoyment of the beauty of women, of nature, and the pleasure of wine.

A particular Persian pleasure was to have an alfresco meal, a picnic, beside running water, a stream or a fountain: and in mixed company. In short the Iranians like to enjoy the good things in life.

Khomeini, perhaps because he was an Ayatollah and so a very holy man, wanted Muslims to follow his example. And if the Iranians did not do so

voluntarily, they should be forced to do so by the "morals police." Nothing turned Iranian popular opinion more strongly against the revolution than the bullying interference of the "morals police," especially in the big cities, where so many Iranians now live.

Equally destructive of faith in the Islamic revolution was the spectacle of the mullahs themselves disobeying the Ayatollah's puritanism and enjoying such things as large houses and expensive cars. The first sighting of a mullah in a Mercedes destroyed the moral foundations of the Islamic revolution.

Similarly the plain living of Mahatma Gandhi's Ram Rajaya was contrary to the easy-going, pleasure-loving Indian national character. No people could produce the colourful silk sari, nor could the complexities of Indian cuisine be abstemious and ascetic and puritanical, not forgetting India's world-famous sex manuals or the so-called "pornographic" sculptures on its temples.

The original sect of the "puritans" dates from the time of Oliver Cromwell in post-Elizabethan England of the 16th and 17th centuries. So Shakespeare was well acquainted with their attitude towards life and he made fun of them.

Indeed, he gave the classic retort to all puritanical practices in his play "Twelfth Night" when the disreputable knight Sir Toby Belch, asks, "think you because you are virtuous there should be no more cakes and ale?" "Cakes and ale" have since become synonymous with the enjoyment of life's simple pleasures.

Outside, observers of India today express surprise that Indian society has so easily and so quickly sloughed off, ignored and forgotten and simply set aside the Gandhian ideals preached by the father of the nation. The real surprise is that they should be surprised.

The failure of the communist ideal was due to a similar, but slightly different, misreading of human nature: Not that ordinary people were not as ascetic as the founding fathers believed but that the average man was not as unselfish and honest as the communist ideal demands.

The failure of communism as a creed and as practice was a noble failure, because it was a failure of the hope of "one for all and all for one," which was the basic belief underlying communism, however much overlaid with dreary dialectic.

Communist economic theory failed to provide an answer to the problem of incentives: Why should a person work for anything larger than himself and his immediate family? Why should he work really hard and devotedly for his town, his community, his class, his country? The only answer would seem to be because of the cash nexus and the fear of punishment for failure, to which may be added, in some cases, professional pride and personal ambition. But these are compulsions, not real incentives. So communism failed.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Fighting raging in south Iraq — opposition

NICOSIA (AFP) — Fierce battles have erupted in southern Iraq between the army and opposition forces, the Iraqi opposition said Sunday. "Fierce battles have been raging in the Qurna region," at the intersection of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, 400 kilometres southeast of Baghdad, the Iraqi National Congress opposition coalition said. It said the fighting began before dawn on Saturday, but gave no reports of any casualties. "The 4th army corps forces have retreated because of the attacks," by rebels, it added in a statement received in Cyprus. Qurna is located in Iraq's southern marshlands, where Muslim Shiite opposition groups have been hiding out since an abortive uprising against Saddam and his army in March 1991, a month after the Gulf war. The Iraqi airforce cannot fly over southern Iraq as U.S., British and French warplanes have been enforcing an air exclusion zone over this area since 1992.

Egypti militants kill policeman

ASSIUT (R) — Suspected Islamist gunmen killed a policeman in southern Egypt, police said on Sunday. They said Ali Rushdi Abdul Sattar was gunned down in the village of Adwa in Minya province, 260 kilometres south of Cairo, as he walked in a street on Saturday night. Further north, security sources said a suspected militant threw an explosive device at a police officer's residence in Beni Suef province on Sunday. The militant escaped and no one was hurt in the attack on Major Mamdouh Abdul Ghani's residence in the town of Ehsaniya, some 110 kilometres south of Cairo. Police in the area deny the attack took place. Security sources believe the attackers in both incidents belong to the militant Al Gamaa Al Islamiyah (Islamic Group), whose guerrillas are fighting to overthrow Egypt's government and establish a strict Islamic state. More than 650 people, mainly police and militants, have been killed in political violence in Egypt since 1992.

AI Gore to visit Egypt in March

CAIRO (R) — U.S. Vice-President Al Gore will visit Egypt in March for talks with President Hosni Mubarak on bilateral cooperation, the official Al Abram newspaper said on Sunday. Mr. Gore's visit will precede one by Mr. Mubarak to Washington in the spring during which the Egyptian president will try to warm relations with the United States, soured over Cairo's refusal to sign an extension of nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty when it comes up in April unless Israel signs. Ties between Egypt and the U.S., which gives Mubarak's government over \$2 billion a year, have also been strained by U.S. newspaper reports claiming corruption in Egypt and criticising Cairo's close ties with Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi and alleged human rights abuses against Muslim militants.

Playwright quits union to protest Adonis ban

BEIRUT (AFP) — Syrian playwright Saadallah Wannas has quit his country's writers union in protest at its ban on leading Arab author Adonis for favouring normalisation with Israel. "I am stepping from the writers union without regret to protest the exclusion of Adonis," Mr. Wannas said in a telegram to the union, published here Sunday. The work of Mr. Wannas, considered as one of the leading Arab playwrights, is fiercely anti-Israel. His best-known work "The Rape" condemns the Israeli occupation of Arab land. Adonis, whose real name is Ali Ahmad Said, was barred from the union last month for having taken part in a 1993 forum of intellectuals also attended by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres. Adonis, a Lebanese of Syrian origin who now lives in Paris, has refused to comment on his exclusion.

Drug suspects wanted by U.S. escape from jail

PESHAWAR (AFP) — Three men wanted in the United States on drug smuggling charges have escaped from a jail here with the help of forged documents, official sources said Sunday. The fugitives include two Afghans and a Pakistani tribesman. Their escape from the Peshawar jail in November went unnoticed until U.S. authorities recently demanded their extradition, the sources said. The details of the charges pending against them in the U.S. and the offences for which they were jailed here were not immediately available. Peshawar Jail Superintendent Mohammad Rafiq Khan confirmed that three prisoners had escaped and said three prison officials had been suspended in connection with the incident.

Uproar against Kuwait bill to regulate press

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Kuwaiti newspapers on Sunday protested a government move to bar public officials from working as journalists. Around 90 per cent of editorial staff on Kuwaiti newspapers also work as public officials. In their editorials, newspapers attacked the bill drafted by Information Minister Sheikh Saud Nasser Al Sabah to stiffen an existing law which has so far been ignored. Hundreds of journalists also organised a sit-in at their association headquarters in Kuwait City on Saturday to protest the bill. In a statement the Kuwaiti Journalists' Association accused the government of trying to "empty newspapers of Kuwaiti journalists which is unacceptable." Before the 1990-1991 Gulf crisis many journalists working in Kuwait were Palestinians. Since 1991, however, 350,000 Palestinians have left the emirate.

Chadian minister visits Iran

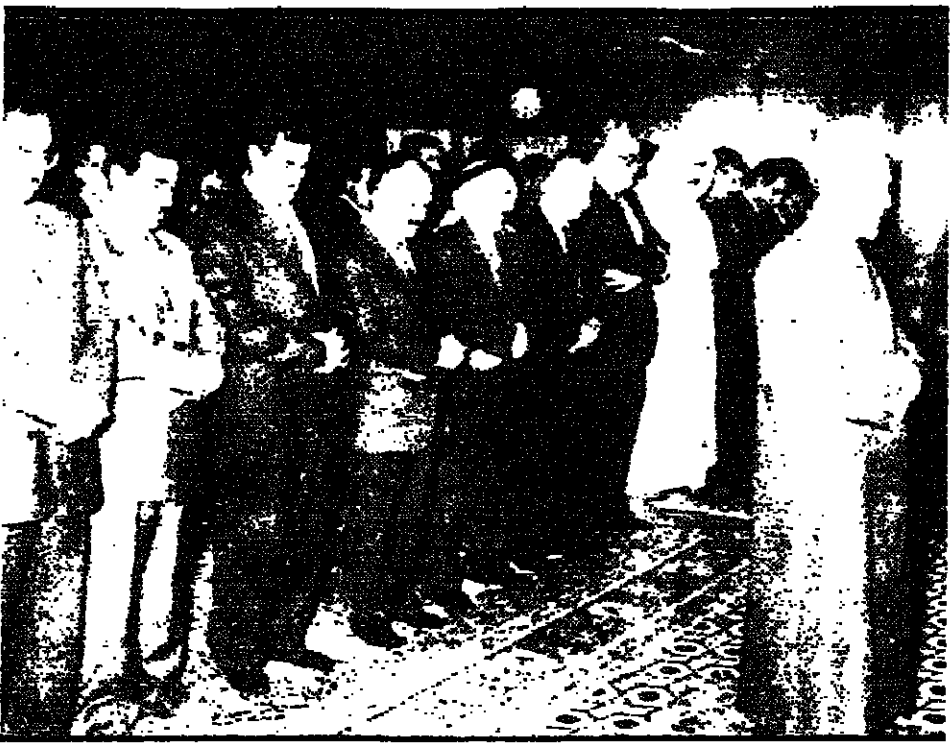
TEHRAN (AFP) — Chadian Foreign Minister Ahmad Abdul Rahman Hagar has called for boosting ties with Iran during an official visit here, the official Iranian news agency IRNA said Sunday. Mr. Hagar arrived here Thursday and took part in ceremonies marking the 16th anniversary of the Islamic revolution on Feb. 11, 1979, it said. In a meeting with his Iranian counterpart Ali Akbar Velayati, the Chadian minister called for boosting cooperation with Iran in the fields of education, agriculture, oil and industry. Chad has recently discovered crude reserves of between 300 to 400 million barrels in the southern regions of the country, according to official figures. N'Djamena signed an accord with a Western consortium in early February to build a pipeline from the field. Iran said last year that it was asked to help Chad develop its oil resources, a claim denied by N'Djamena. The Chadian minister also met with President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani on Sunday and urged Iran to help in his country's development programmes, according to Tehran Radio. The visit comes in response to a brief stop over in N'Djamena by Mr. Velayati last March while on a tour of several African nations.

Cairo censors story on human rights abuses

CAIRO (AP) — An American human rights organisation has criticised the Egyptian government for censoring a story related to human rights abuses in a weekly English-language newspaper. The Human Rights Watch-Middle East said in a statement that it was "a blatant violation of freedom of expression" to ban a story about the arrest of the widow of a lawyer who died in mysterious circumstances in government custody. Andrew Hammond, a spokesman for the Middle East Times, said Sunday that the government censor ordered a news story removed from the Feb. 12-18 edition about Wafa Al Bakri, the 21-year-old widow of Abdul Harith Medani. The government censor who handled the case was not immediately available for comment, and another official in the censor's office refused to answer questions.

Crown Prince hosts iftar

HIS ROYAL Highness Crown Prince Hassan on Sunday hosted an iftar in honour of ambassadors of Arab and Islamic countries in Jordan, the president and members of Al al Bayt Foundation, members of the Royal Commission on Al al Bayt University, the board of trustees of the Arab Thought Forum, presidents of Jordanian universities and the Higher Ifta' Council. The iftar was attended by His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi Ben Muhammad, the King's cultural secretary, Deputy Prime Minister and Information Minister Khaled Al Karaki, the chief Islamic Justice, the minister of youth, the Crown Prince's advisors and senior Royal Court officials.



Talibans close in on Kabul

KABUL (AFP) — The forces of Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani are strengthening their defences on the western front lines to ward off any threat from advancing Taliban troops near Kabul, locals said Sunday.

A defence ministry spokesman confirmed the defences were being reinforced, but did not link it to the rapid advance of the Taliban, who have said they want to capture the capital.

The spokesman said efforts had been made to communicate with the Taliban and that the two sides were "soon" to meet.

The Taliban, who have rapidly grown into a well-armed force of an estimated 25,000 from a mere 800 when they surfaced six months ago, last week captured Maidan Shahar, 30 kilometres south of Kabul in Wardak province.

The Taliban also allowed food convoys into Kabul at the weekend after they opened up a main highway during their stunning advance.

The latest victory for the force, which is led by Islamic students, has badly shaken Afghanistan's traditional mujahedeen groups over the past six months.

Afghan sources in Pakistan said Sunday that most of Logar province south of Kabul fell to the Taliban the previous day.

The Hezbe-Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, which

has been fighting Mr. Rabbani's forces, denied it had lost Logar, but conceded the capture of Maidan Shahar although it claimed its forces had deliberately withdrawn from the city to let the Taliban enter Kabul.

Logar became the ninth of Afghanistan's 30 provinces to fall to the radical Taliban. A Taliban spokesman said there was little resistance.

The provincial governor, Ihsanullah, allied to Mr. Hekmatyar's Hezbe-Islami, fled to Charasyab, the fundamentalists' headquarters 25 kilometres south of Kabul, the Taliban spokesman said.

With last week's fall of Maidan Shahar the Hekmatyar stronghold is badly exposed to Taliban raids, diplomats and experts said.

Taliban leaders are due to meet in Kandahar, the old royal capital they took six months ago to decide their next move.

The radicals have said their aim is to take Kabul and rid Afghanistan of the rival mujahedeen, whom they describe as "criminals."

A Taliban spokesman said the Shoura, or general assembly, in Kandahar will decide whether its army moves on Kabul or the Hekmatyar headquarters in Charasyab.

But the Taliban's advance has put a question mark over the U.N.-initiated transfer of power and ceasefire scheduled for this month.

Mr. Rabbani, whose two-year mandate ran out on Dec. 28, is to hand over

power to a new government around Feb. 20. The representative body, put together under a United Nations peace plan, will be made up of "neutral personalities" and of the nine groups who fought the anti-Soviet war from 1979 to 1989.

A ceasefire in the civil war, mainly between Mr. Hekmatyar's and Mr. Rabbani's groups, that has cost more than 20,000 lives since the fall of the communist government in April 1992 would follow the handover.

The Taliban say they are not opposed to the U.N. peace efforts but say they will not sit with the mujahedeen, whom they consider "criminals."

The new radicals, trained at Pakistani Islamic schools, have three major advantages, analysts say. Their army of an estimated 25,000 men has a formidable weaponry, including 200 tanks and a dozen fighter jets.

Diplomats say it is backed by Pakistan — which is denied in Islamabad — and may get Saudi Arabian funds. But all experts agree they get enormous goodwill from weary citizens.

Diplomats in Pakistan said, meanwhile, that Iran was incensed over the Taliban's rise, seeing American involvement in the phenomenon.

The Taliban advance has had one clear effect — the value of the afghani in Kabul has improved.

Iran bans hardline newspaper

TEHRAN (Agencies) — Iranian authorities banned a radical newspaper after it published charges by a hardliner that the country's leaders had failed to export Iran's Islamic revolution, a board member said on Sunday.

But the member of Jahan-e-Islami's board added it was preparing the interview with former Interior Minister Ali Akbar Mohtashemi for distribution in full and was considering legal action.

"We are not sure what exactly is our press violation. But we were led to believe by the guidance ministry official in charge... that the publication of an interview with Mohtashemi is related to the ban," the member said.

"We are awaiting formal announcement of our violation before we take legal action," he told Reuters.

Salam newspaper said on Sunday that Iran's Press supervisory commission voted on Thursday to halt publication of the daily.

Jahan-e-Islami is run by Hadi Khamenei, the younger brother of Iran's spiritual leader. It is the only newspaper remaining strictly loyal to Mr. Mohtashemi's militant group which believes in promoting Islamic revolution throughout the world.

On Wednesday it published the third part of a five-part interview with Mr. Mohtashemi in which he accused Iranian leaders of deviating from the path of the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, founder of the Islamic republic.

Asked if the current Iranian leaders were following in Khomeini's footsteps, Mr. Mohtashemi was quoted as saying: "Unfortunately, high officials and executives have deviated from original revolutionary goals and values."

"Taking after imam (Khomeini) we believe in... expansion and export of revolution to all over the world... on the contrary, there are those who limit the revolution to the country they run," he added.

Yemen

(Continued from page 1)

issues. But we'll not take months for that. Some issues require consultations with legal experts and their efforts could be made easy if the politicians show flexibility," he was quoted as saying.

The newspaper also quoted "high-level sources" as saying that a summit meeting between King Fahd and Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh "is likely to take place" in the Holy City of Mecca this month "to endorse the final agreement."

A Yemeni official in Sanaa said Saturday the talks were in "an impasse" as Riyadh "rejects a Yemeni proposal to demarcate the whole of the common frontier" from the Omani-Saudi-Yemen triangle to the Red Sea.

But Mr. Bajammal insisted in Riyadh: "The negotiators have accomplished 80 per cent of their mission, aimed at drawing up a memorandum of understanding on the ways of solving the outstanding problems between the two countries."

If his comments are confirmed, Sanaa will have won two out of its three demands. It also wants the two countries, whose relations have been poisoned by the 60-year-old border dispute and the 1991 Gulf war, to normalise ties and has urged Riyadh to extradite southern Yemenis who fled to Saudi Arabia after Yemen's May-July civil war last year.

King: Jordan will set model

(Continued from page 1)

United States and elsewhere of those who threaten that peace and I think particularly of terrorist organisations which caused so much grief even in my own city of New York... and in Tel Aviv and Algeria for that matter," Mr. Rifkind said.

"Therefore, we launched a vigorous campaign to encourage the civilised countries of the world to join together, to resist all the forces of terrorism and the countries that are hospitable to such terrorism," he said.

"We hope to do everything we can... to help the development of peace in this area." In an interview with the Jordan Times, Mr. Rifkind spoke of the readiness of Jewish-American organisations including his own to bring aid to Jordan to help economic development, which would allow Jordanians to get a palpable sense of the benefits of peace.

However, Mr. Rifkind also warned that the reticence of many Jordanians in implementing the process of normalisation with Israel made donors reluctant. "In order to muster U.S. aid, we need to be able to show that the process of normalisation is moving," Mr. Rifkind said.

Speaking of the eagerness of the Jewish American community to aid Jordan in reaping the benefits of peace, Mr. Rifkind also admitted that "this is not the opening (to

peaceful relations) we were led to expect."

Mr. Rifkind warned of the dangers of serious disillusionment that might follow on the Israeli side and in the U.S. and its potential political consequences.

In the words of the director of the American Jewish Committee's Israel and Middle East office in Jerusalem, Joseph Alpher, "the committee would like to use its influence in the U.S. and in Israel to promote the peace process."

The American Jewish Committee, founded in 1906, is the largest and oldest Jewish organisation in the United States. It describes itself as working in the interest of world peace based on good relations between all races and religions. Its work involves a wide spectrum of activities addressing interfaith and inter-communal relations, minority rights and issues such as anti-Semitism and terrorism, it says.

In support and anticipation of a successful implementation of the peace process, the committee is the first Jewish-American organisation represented in Israel to have expanded its Israel office to incorporate the Middle East, Mr. Alpher said. The committee's office in Jerusalem will be equally concerned with American-Israeli, American-Arab, Arab-Israeli and Muslim-Jewish relations, he said.

Rights group censures PNA

(Continued from page 1)

Brigadier General Hassan Abu Libdeh, director-general of the Palestinian Justice Ministry, conceded there were cases of abuse by lower-ranking officers that "we are not aware of" but maintained it was "too early" to judge the newly founded self-rule government.

"I believe the authority is acting properly and according to law in most of the cases," he told the Associated Press. "I think we need time to be a perfect authority."

Human Rights Watch also expressed concern about beatings and mistreatment of Palestinian detainees, especially of detainees accused of collaborating with Israel. Two Palestinians have died in custody, and in one case PLO authorities charged police with misconduct although none has yet been brought to trial.

Hanan Ashrawi, head of the Palestinian independent commission for human rights, investigated allegations about jail house beatings and torture.

examined the financial status of the government-owned Sawt Al Shaab daily.

Minister of Industry and Trade Ali Abul Ragheb replied that the House Finance Committee had presented a number of recommendations for dealing with the Jordanian firms that are in financial difficulties, including Sawt Al Shaab.

The minister said that the daily had sustained losses that exceeded its capital, and this justifies its liquidation in accordance with the Companies Law.

He said that the Sawt Al Shaab firm would be liquidated through legal procedures which would safeguard the rights of shareholders and workers. All potential buyers would be involved in the liquidation process and the firm will be sold for the highest bidder, he said.

At the same session Sunday, Deputy Hamzeh Mansour complained that the government had banned a group of Islamic Action Front (IAF) deputies from visiting what he called political prisoners at Swaga prison though the prime minister has given his approval for such a visit provided that matters should be coordinated with the interior minister. (see related story).

In reply Interior Minister Salameh Hammad said that none of the inmates in Swaga was a political prisoner stressing that all the inmates are people who had violated the laws or committed crimes including criminals who were found to be involved in bombing attacks. He did not elaborate.

Noting that the House can organise a visit to the prison by its Public Freedoms Committee, Mr. Hammad denied charges by Islamic Action Front (IAF) deputies against the government and the prison's administration and underlined that international committees and societies visit the prison periodically. He said none of them had complained of human rights violations in the prison.

The House can arrange for a visit to the prison by the Committee for Public Freedoms in Parliament which is concerned with such matters, said Mr. Hammad.

He said that accusations levelled against the government and the prison administration by the IAF members are groundless. Several international societies and orga-

nisations as well as physicians pay regular visits to the prison but none of them has ever complained of human rights violations there.

Following the minister's statement, agreement was reached on forming a committee representing the House and including the Public Freedoms Committee and led by House Speaker Saad Sour to pay a visit to Swaga prison and inspect conditions there.

Deputy Abul Karim Dughmi (Mafraq) raised the question of damages to public property resulting from the recent snowstorms. The government had committed itself to paying compensation to those who sustained losses or damage to their property, he noted. But he said he contacted several concerned parties and found that the compensation would be very limited and would be distributed through the Ministry of Social Development.

Deputy Premier and Minister of Education Abdul Raouf Rawabdeh replied that a government committee had already studied the situation and its report prompted the government to allocate JD 130,000 from the budget for public education in addition to JD 10,000 from the Zakat Fund to distribute to these people.

He said that JD 1,500 will be paid to each family that lost a member in the floods. It would not be compensation but as emergency assistance, he said.

Deputy Mustafa Shneikat (Balqa) raised the question of the encroachment on state-owned land by the Aqua Marina Hotel in Aqaba and demanded that the government put an end to such practices to protect public interest. He said that the hotel was infringing on land owned by the Aqaba Hotel, which is owned and run by the Social Security Corporation.

Deputy Ibrahim Samara (Ramtha) voiced his constituency's appreciation of His Majesty King Hussein for his care and concern over the victims of the road accident last week which resulted in the loss of five policemen — all from the Ramtha district. He demanded that the government give due attention to the Rweished-Mafraq-Irbid road where the accident occurred and ensure that constant maintenance is carried out there.

Oil monarchies learn harsh reality of unemployment

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AFP) — Arab Gulf monarchies are learning the harsh reality of unemployment in an era of weak oil prices, after decades of soaking up job-seekers on the state payroll.

Oman's Sultan Qaboos has criticised his own people for boycotting jobs in several sectors because of low wages and at the same time the private sector for serving only their own interests by employing lower-paid foreigners.

He disclosed that around 30,000 Omanis were jobless, in a country of more than two million people of whom 535,000 are foreign workers.

Based on the Gulf International Bank's (GIB) figure of a 162,000-strong Omani working population in 1990, the sultanate's unemployment rate is running as high as 18 per cent.

According to the GIB, which is owned jointly by the six oil-rich states making up the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the overall unemployment rate for their nationals was already 14.8 per cent in 1991.

The GCC — grouping Oman with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) — set up ministerial committees in December to "explore opportunities to meet the increasing demand for jobs."

Although most member states do not publish jobless statistics, they have for the last three decades experienced what Sultan Qaboos termed "unemployment in disguise."

He was referring to the practice of inflating the civil service and army to absorb job-seekers.

The GCC's annual oil income fell from \$180 billion in 1980 to between \$60 and \$70 billion over the past three years, creating high budget deficits.

The World Bank in May 1993 called on Oman to cut the number of civil servants and lower their salaries in an effort to ease the deficit.

As an example of the inflated number of government employees in some GCC member states, 150,763

Kuwaitis work in the civil service, or 93 per cent of the active population among nationals.

The 8.6-million-strong expatriate community in the six countries make up 37 per cent of their 23-million overall population, according to 1993 figures from the Gulf Organisation for Industrial Consulting (GOIC).

In Bahrain, the GIB said 55 per cent of the 220,000-strong workforce is made up of foreigners.

Bahraini opposition groups and diplomats have said unemployment was a main cause of the unrest which flared in the small archipelago in December, although the government blamed unnamed foreign countries.

According to Bahrain's newspapers, the number of jobless Bahrainis jumped from 4,000 in 1981 (6.6 per cent of the local active population) to 13,000 in 1991 (15 per cent).

The opposition says the real figure is at least three times higher.

Despite such difficulties,

the Gulf still imports foreign labour. In post-war Kuwait, despite pledges to cut the number of foreign workers, the overall workforce rose from 737,676 in 1993 to 938,778 in 1994.

The high birthrate in the GCC could add to the problem, as an extra million job-seekers are expected to go on the market by the year 2000, GOIC Secretary General Abdul Rahman Al Jafri said last month.

With a 3.5 per cent annual population growth rate and 43 per cent of the population aged below 20, the GCC population is expected to reach 32 million by the end of the century, he added.

The crisis is even taking its toll on the expatriate community, of whom more than 16 per cent are unemployed, according to the GIB.

"The rise in the number of jobless people among immigrants is worrying," said the UAE labour and social affairs minister, Seif Al Jarwan. He blamed the increase for the rising crime rate in the Gulf.

Lebanon's war-devastated infrastructure is accelerating and telephone and electricity services will improve noticeably in 1995, the government's reconstruction agency said Sunday.

"The reconstruction process is accelerating in many sectors, but... much still remains to be done," the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) said in its 1994 annual report, obtained by Reuters before publication.

It said it had so far obtained foreign finance for the recovery programme worth \$1.9 billion — \$1.5 billion in loans and \$397 million in grants — an increase of 21 per cent since its last report in May 1994.

The recovery programme was intended to revitalise the economy, provide infrastructure for proper operation of the private sector, and to double gross domestic product (GDP) in 10 years, the CDR said.

It forecast "noticeable improvement" in telephone services by mid-1995 due to installation of digital exchanges and fibre optic lines by

Lebanon's reconstruction accelerates, agency says

Alcatel of France, Ericsson of Sweden and Siemens of Germany.

Work by the three companies, under contracts worth \$509 million, was well advanced, the CDR said.

"By mid-1995 all telephones will be connected to digital exchanges," it added.

Two mobile telephone networks of 30,000 subscribers each being installed by French and Finnish companies under BOT (build, operate, transfer) contracts should start operating in early 1995, the CDR added.

Electricity users will also have a "more reliable supply" by April 1995 when power stations with an installed capacity of 750 megawatts and transmission networks will have been repaired by Ansaldo of Italy and Hyundai of South Korea.

At present Beirut users receive state electricity for only 6-12 hours of every 24.

The CDR said installed capacity would rise to 1,050 megawatts by August 1995 and then to 1,350 megawatts, giving an actual capacity of 900 megawatts capable of supplying power for up to 18 hours a day.

The CDR also signed contracts worth \$536 million in 1994 with Ansaldo of Italy and Siemens for construction of two new power stations to add 870 megawatts by 1997.

Other achievements in 1994 included rehabilitation of 540 public schools. Work was nearly complete on 498 other schools and 224 more would be completed later in 1995, the report said.

The CDR, the government's main agency for managing national reconstruction after the 1975-90 civil war, said it had more than 70 consultancy, construction and supply contracts in operation. These and contracts already completed were worth \$1.9 billion.

It said its principle aims in financing reconstruction were now to avoid recourse to deficit financing, which heavily burdened the state budget in the last three years, and to ensure it did not jeopardise private sector recovery.

The government was therefore concentrating on mobilising external financing through foreign grants and loans, contractor financing, Eurobond issues and BOT schemes, the CDR said.

WASHINGTON (R) — The capital of the country with the world's biggest economy is facing the most severe financial crisis in a century, compounding its serious social problems, Mayor Marion Barry has revealed.

Mr. Barry released an audit showing that Washington D.C.'s budget deficit is far worse than earlier believed, and unless drastic measures are taken, the city will outspend revenues by \$722 million in this current fiscal year ending on Sept. 30.

Already among the U.S. cities with the highest homicide and infant mortality rates, the budget crisis threatens to deepen Washington's problems by reducing funds to care them.

The newly-installed mayor said he was planning to ask Congress to slash the wages of city workers and give him more control over public school spending in a bid to avoid federal intervention in running the city.

The city is a federal enclave with limited home rule powers. Congress still oversees its budget and can veto legislative action by its city council.

Washington's 600,000 citizens, mostly black, have no voting members in the U.S. Congress, only a non-voting District of Columbia delegate. It also has limited taxing authority.

The deficit is over 20 per cent of the city's total annual budget of \$3.2 billion.

Poverty still massive in Vietnam

HANOI (AFP) — Half of Vietnam's 72 million people still live below the poverty line and malnutrition is widespread among children despite impressive economic growth in recent years, press reports have warned here.

According to the communist Nhan Dan daily which published extracts of the nationwide survey, "the general level of poverty is very high" in Vietnam.

Even in the southern Mekong delta, which is considered the country's most prosperous area, "about one half of the population have the consumption-per-capita level below the poverty level," the newspaper said.

This survey of living standards in Vietnam, one of the poorest countries in the region, was conducted in 1992 and 1993 by the State Planning Committee and the National Department of Statistics.

It received financial assistance from the U.N. Development Programme and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), and advisory help from the World Bank.

The survey points out wide regional disparities, with the percentage of people living in "absolute poverty" ranging from 33 per cent in south-east provinces to 71 per cent in the north-central coastal provinces.

GCC states unlikely to form common market by 2000

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab Gulf states are unlikely to reach their goal of achieving a regional common market by the end of the century despite some progress toward a customs union, experts said Sunday.

The six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states have set 2000 as a deadline for the common market but economists doubted the project would materialise on time.

While they have made headway in plans for a customs union, one of the pillars for a common market, the six members have yet to agree on a monetary merger or to allow each other to open bank branches.

At their last annual summit

in Bahrain in December, GCC leaders agreed to permit citizens from the six oil-rich nations to own up to 25 per cent of the shares in their trading companies. But the decision excluded banks and insurance firms and there were temporary exemptions.

Citing the absence of sufficient legislation for stocks activity, the UAE and Qatar also asked to be excluded from the decision for five years. Three other members, Oman, Kuwait and Bahrain already allow such an ownership while Saudi Arabia has yet to comply.

"There were a handful of Saudi companies trading their shares in the GCC before the Bahraini summit de-

cision. But no new company has given access to other GCC investors since the summit," a Gulf stock broker said.

"I think most of the Saudi companies will consider such a move when their general assemblies start meeting in the first and second quarters of this year to approve their balance sheets. But this will take time as those firms need to modify their laws and statutes to absorb non-national investors," he added.

GCC states agreed to establish a common market under an economic pact signed two years ago following a defence, economic and political alliance created in 1981. The market envisages

creating a customs union, linking their stock markets and aligning their currencies.

GCC officials have reported progress in unifying their customs tariffs, and some of them expect the project to see light within two years, since most of them joined the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1994.

But reservations by some members about delinking their money from the U.S. dollar have blocked plans for currency alignment, which is an alternative to an earlier proposal for a common currency, the Gulf dinar.

Saudi Finance and Economy Minister Mohammad Abul Khail, said recently the

GCC countries were temporarily shelving alignment plans as exchange rates in the six members were stable and the gap was not too wide.

"I don't think a common market will be ready by 2000 as a customs union alone is not enough," a GCC bank manager said.

"The UAE and Qatar will wait for five years to implement the recent GCC summit decision while Saudi institutions have yet to comply. Banks still can not open branches in some GCC members and several rounds of talks been bogged down over a joint tariff on foreign imports," he added.

Diplomats said border disputes were another main fac-

tor in obstructing economic integration plans in the GCC.

"Border disputes are an obstacle for integration as you can not separate politics from economy," one diplomat said.

The Gulf group is the biggest oil exporter in the world, producing nearly one fifth of the world's total crude output with reserves of over 45 per cent of the world's one trillion barrels.

De Klerk calls for Indian Ocean trade pact

SYDNEY (R) — South African Deputy President F.W. de Klerk has called for an Indian Ocean rim trading pact to counter the emergence of large economic blocs.

"The time has come for the countries of the southern stars to show the world what we can do," Mr. De Klerk said, calling on Australia to jointly promote the pact.

Mr. De Klerk said Indian Ocean rim countries risked becoming "enslaved" by newly created economic blocs, but did not mention names.

Speaking at a business lunch in Sydney during a five-day visit to Australia, Mr. De Klerk said he was not suggesting a European Union

style bloc or a challenge to the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) grouping.

"I am not preaching that we should in any way form a cartel," he said. "I think we should mainly focus on trade."

Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans said Australia supported such a move and would host a conference in June of Indian Ocean rim countries in Perth to advance the grouping.

"We're delighted to see that expression of enthusiasm from Mr. De Klerk," Mr. Evans told the Australian Broadcasting Corp radio.

"The idea of an Indian Ocean regional grouping,

covering both trade and, hopefully, security matters as well, is one that we've been actively floating," he said.

Mr. Evans said an Indian Ocean pact would not conflict with APEC, which groups 18 nations around the Pacific, including Australia, the United States, Japan and China.

"It's a bit like Olympic rings. Overlapping circles. I think, is the way in which we perceive these sorts of groupings emerging," Mr. Evans said.

"We're not talking about exclusive trade blocs, we're talking about regional economic cooperation."

Mr. De Klerk suggested South Africa, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, India

and Indonesia could form the Indian Ocean pact.

The newspaper said Mr. De Klerk's strong support for the grouping contrasts with South African President Nelson Mandela's lukewarm support.

In his Sydney speech, Mr. De Klerk said South Africa, which held its first all-race elections in April 1994, is poised for sustained and impressive domestic economic growth.

He also said that South Africa was now the gateway to southern Africa with an estimated market of 110 million people.

"The stage is set for us to play a particularly significant role in Africa and particularly

in southern Africa," Mr. De Klerk said.

"As peace takes root in key countries and as southern African governments continue with democratic and economic reforms, we can expect this market to offer increasingly exciting opportunities," he said.

Mr. De Klerk said South Africa's government of national unity, despite its differences on some issues, was committed to its current economic policies aimed at opening up the country and attracting foreign investment.

"Economic policy is well in place and is firmly supported by all members of the government of national unity," he said.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR MONDAY FEBRUARY 13, 1995

By Thomas S. Pearson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) An ideal day to do something thoughtful for persons who mean much in your life. Gentility is the keynote now for an easy way to avoid an argument.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Putting things in order around you is wise in the morning. Then extend special favours to those who have been most loyal and helpful to you.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You are able to get into the inexpensive pleasure that you enjoy with friends. Control your temper with a person whose ideas you do not like.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Supporting your family in their ideas is good and also makes a good impression on others. Take it easy tonight and take some time for yourself.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) An ideal day for reading which you have put off. Also, converse with persons of wisdom and integrity. Relatives and friends are apt to be irritable, so avoid them for the time being.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Try not to spend foolishly today just to please selfish people. Show good reasoning powers on whatever may arise. Evening is ideal for some interesting reading.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You are feeling limited and dull today, so go to an amusement or recreation or see an inspiring picture on TV. Or go to a play and have some good fun this evening.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Show that you can be of great help to those who are in trouble. Extend your own horizons. If you think and act in an ethical fashion today, you can be free of private worries.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) A friend acts in a strange fashion, but it is not your fault so be patient and kind. Join in group activities this evening and avoid possible trouble.

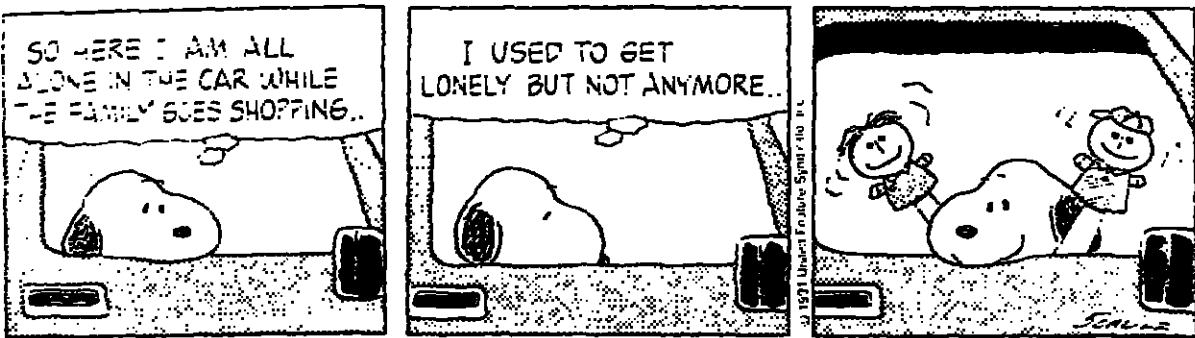
CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Showing good judgement with persons who have power over your affairs is wise today. Plan how to be more influential in your community.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Visit with the most high-minded people you know and make this an inspiring day, whether it be in spiritual, scientific, or business matters.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Being sure to use good judgement is important since your hunches are not good at this time. Carefully attend to any responsibilities which you may have set up for this evening.

Birthstone of February: Amethyst — Onyx

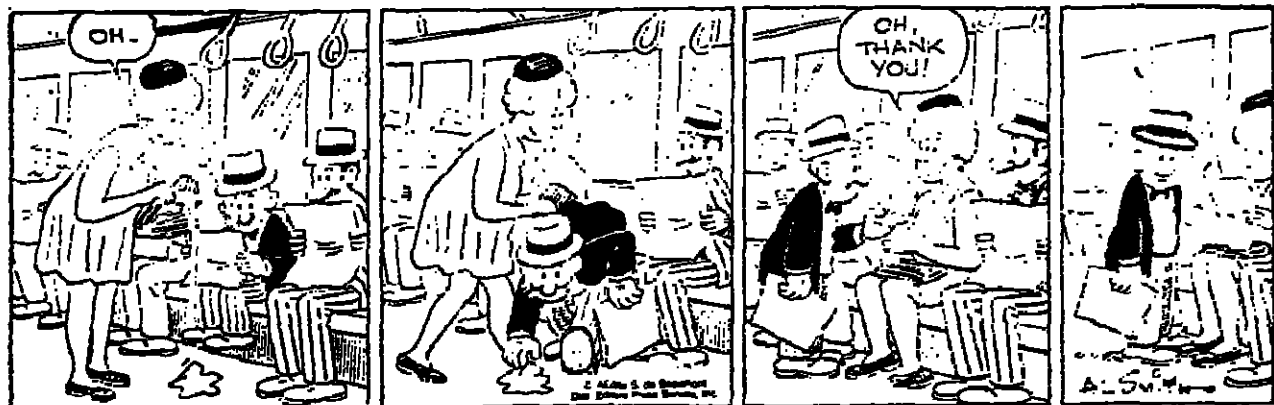
Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff

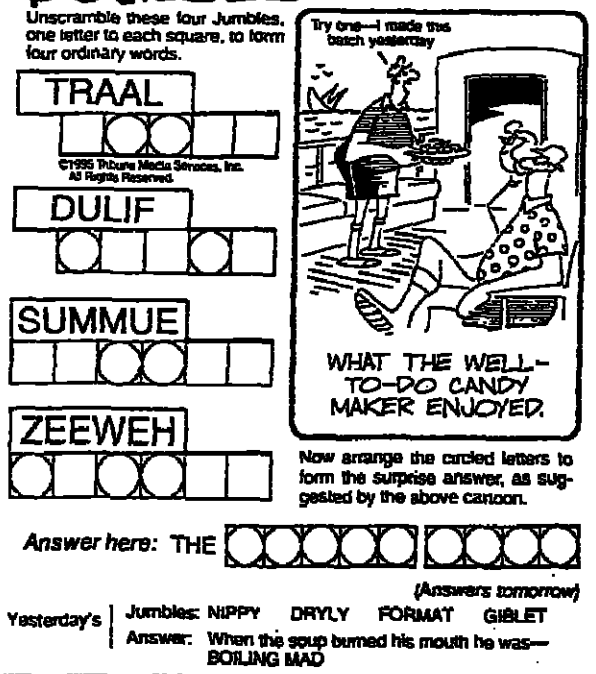


THE BETTER HALF

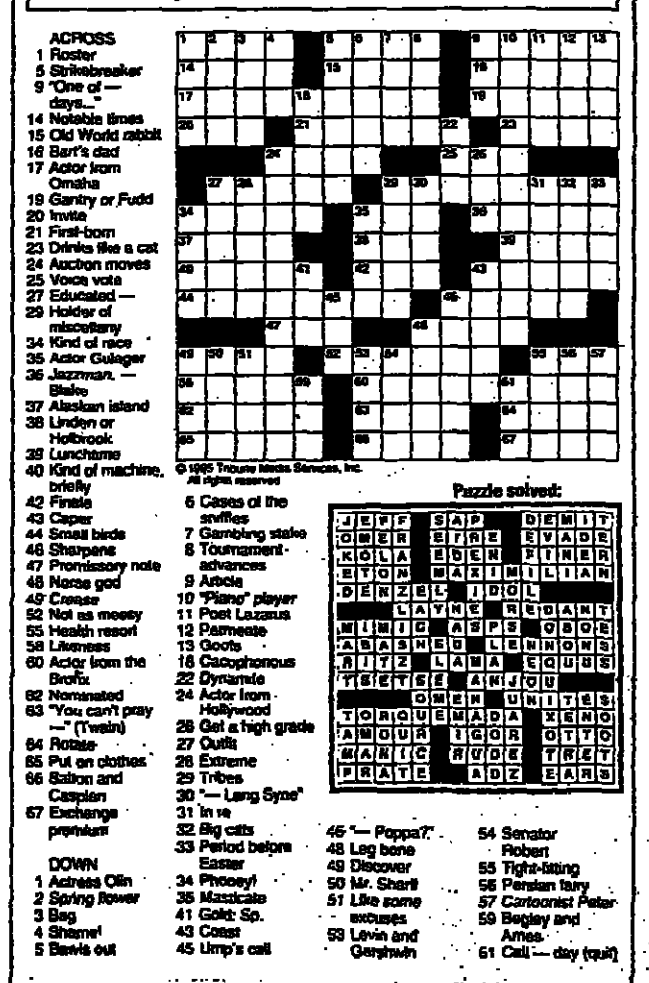
By Glasbergen



JUMBLE



THE Daily Crossword



U.S. capital city in dire financial straits

WASHINGTON (R) — The world's biggest economic crisis is in the capital city of the United States, as the city's budget deficit reaches a record \$2.2 billion for the fiscal year ending in September.

Mr. Barry released a report showing that Washington's budget deficit is worse than earlier years, and unless drastic measures are taken, the city will spend revenues by \$2.2 billion in this current fiscal year.

Already among the cities with the highest deficits, the budget deficit is threatening to threaten Washington's position as the nation's capital. The newly installed Mayor, Mr. Barry, said he was planning to ask Congress to slash the city's budget and to take more control over the city's spending in order to avoid federal intervention.

The city is a federal district with limited home rule powers. Congress still sees the city as a federal district. It is also a federal district. It is also a federal district.

Washington's 600,000 residents, mostly black, are living in a city that is a federal district. It is also a federal district.

OSCOPE

MONDAY FEBRUARY 13, 1995

OSCOPE

MONDAY FEBRUARY 13, 1995

business daily beat

A review of economic news from the Arabic press

Egypt to lower Suez Canal fees on goods to Jordan

★ The Jordanian and Egyptian authorities have reached a preliminary agreement to lower Suez Canal fees on goods destined to Amman by between 30 to 50 per cent.

Such a step would increase the competitive edge of the Amman port, among other ports in the area, especially for transport to and from Europe (Al Aswaq).

★ Jordanian and Egyptian authorities have agreed to expand the role of the Arab Maritime Bridge Company to include tourism transport and cargo transport. The company is expected to put its first class tourist vessel into service at the beginning of April to take tourists between the ports of Agaba-Nuweibeh-Sharm Al Sheikh (Al Aswaq).

★ The first batch of a new price list for imported drugs was released by the Ministry of Health and the second is expected within a couple of days. According to the list, the average price decline was nine per cent. Drugs that are most likely to cost more are those of Swiss, German and, probably British origin, while prices of Italian and Greek drugs will decline. The Ministry of Health reviews prices of imported drugs whenever changes occur in the exchange rate of foreign currencies against the dinar (Al Aswaq).

★ An economist estimated the volume of losses at the Amman Financial Market since February 1994 at JD 321 million. The figure translates into JD 68,360 per individual. A broker at the stock exchange estimates the number of investors in shares and stocks at 880,000 persons (Al Dastour).

★ Royal Jordanian sold its stake of 90,000 shares in Jordan Express Tourist Transport Co. to the Cairo Amman Bank. The price was JD 50 per share (Al Dastour).

★ The general assembly of the Jordan Gulf Real Estate Investment Company has agreed to merge with Petra Enterprises and Equipment Leasing Company. The new company will have a JD 5 million capital, JD 4.5 million of which will be that of Jordan Gulf and JD 0.5 million of Petra Enterprises. The new company will focus on developing key land plots, building comprehensive and developed housing complexes and entering in the tourism and hotel business (Al Aswaq).

★ The Ministry of Water and Irrigation has a comprehensive plan to modernise the national water network at a cost of JD 55.6 million. Water lost in the network in Greater Amman exceeds 53 per cent and the plan aims to reduce this to ten per cent. The plan, which is to be implemented in stages soon, will first include Jabal Amman, Jabal Luweibeh, Jabal Al Hussein, Al Jofeh, Al Hashemi, Al Shamali, Al Ashrafieh, Marka, downtown Amman and Wadi Al Haddadeh as well as the cities of Irbid, Zarqa, Mafraq and Ramtha. The second stage of the plan involves modernising depleted water networks in other areas of Greater Amman (Al Ra'i).

★ The Arab Union International Insurance Company posted a net profit of JD 192,608 net during its 1993/1994 financial year, 47 per cent lower than the previous year. The company attributed the lower profit to the JD 101,754 loss in the vehicle insurance department as premiums remained unchanged despite rising costs for car repair and spare parts. Despite the decline in profit the company is distributing JD 112,000 in dividends at 14 per cent (Al Aswaq).

Diet changes in Asia keep threat of shortage at bay

HONG KONG (AFP) — Changing diet in several Asian countries keeping at bay a possible shortage of rice, the region's staple, despite the pressure of growing population, natural calamities and diminishing farmlands.

To stave off shortages, Asian governments are monitoring stockpiles in the region, which accounts for 90 per cent of the 500 million tonnes of rice produced in the world annually, analysts told AFP.

Asian history is replete with instances of government being toppled as a result of rice shortages, they said.

Mahabub Hossain, an economist at the Philippines-based International Rice Research Institute, said per capita rice consumption has decreased in high- and middle-income countries such as Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia.

"This is because people in these countries have reached income levels that allow them to eat more in fast food joints and restaurants as well as afford meat, fish, vegetable and bread," he said.

But he warned against complacency, noting that the majority of countries, including China, India, Indonesia and Bangladesh, were still heavily dependent on rice, adding: "Rice is a luxury for the poor."

Figures showed that 70 per cent of the more than three billion people in Asia subsist wholly or partially on rice.

Lee Tseng-Chung, an official of the Taiwan council of agriculture, said the Taiwanese were eating less rice due to a greater diversity of food choices.

"It is a common trend, people tend to consume less rice as they get richer," said John Leung, the Hong Kong's government principal trade officer.

Consumption of rice in Hong Kong declined 14 per cent to 327,000 kilograms last year compared with the previous year, and per capita consumption has fallen sharply from 120 kilograms in 1961 to 56 kilograms last year, Mr. Leung said.

"There is a trend towards the mushrooming of fast-food and western-food outlets," said Retno Widiastuti, a researcher at the Foundation of Indonesian Consumers.

These changes were "important" because a majority of these fast-food outlets' clients were young, he said.

Only four per cent of the world's current total rice output is traded between nations.

But under new World Trade Organisation agricultural measures, nations such as Thailand and Japan are being forced to open up their rice markets.

Nevertheless, rice production has declined in several countries including China, Taiwan and Indonesia.

China, according to a recent World Population Research Institute report, will find it hard to feed its population — 22 per cent of the world's total — with only seven per cent of the world's farmland.

Xie Zhenghua, State Environment Bureau director, has said that with a net population increase of 14 million each year, "the lack of farmland is a major problem."

Rice production in Taiwan dropped to 1.7 million tonnes last year from 1993's 1.82 million tonnes, while the island's paddy fields currently cover 560,000 hectares (889,200 acres), down from 790,000 hectares (1.95 million acres) two decades ago.

Indonesia has registered a worrying rice production drop for the second consecutive year, the first such fall in 25 years, Minister of State for Food Affairs Ibrahim Hasan said. Indonesia is trying to beef up its rice stocks.

Suvmol Tantasupasiri, head of Mahidol University's Nutrition Department, said fast foods do not make Thais eat less rice because they are expensive and not as filling.

Thailand, the world's top rice exporter, sold 4.8 million tonnes last year, and is expected to increase rice production to 13.58 million tonnes next year from last year's 12.18 million tonnes.

Thailand also wants to reduce rice farming areas to improve quality and to maintain prices.

Vietnam, the world's third largest rice exporter after the United States, sold a record 2.2 million tonnes in 1994, up by 400,000 tonnes over the 1993 figure.

Vietnam's rice output increased by 700,000 tonnes to 23.5 million tonnes last year, despite devastating floods which destroyed more than one million tonnes.

U.S. replaces Japan as top car producer after 15 years in second place

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan gave up its title as the world's top automobile producer last year, giving the crown back to the United States for the first time since 1979, an industry association has said.

The Japan Automobile Manufacturers Association said Japan's automobile output declined six per cent from a year earlier to 1,554,119 units in the year to December, compared with 12,357,486 units produced by U.S. carmakers.

Japanese output declined for the fourth consecutive year due to a fall in exports and an increase in overseas production in the wake of the yen's appreciation, association officials said.

Output of cars dropped 8.2 per cent to 7,801,317 units, while truck production edged up 0.7 per cent to 2,703,690 units. Bus production was up 2.2 per cent at 49,112 units.

The association said domestic demand in 1994 totalled 6,526,696 units, up 0.9 per cent from a year earlier, while exports fell about 11 per cent to some 4.46 million units.

In December alone, automobile production in Japan grew 9.4 per cent from a year earlier to 863,393 units, expanding for the third consecutive month after 25 months of consecutive decline.

Foreign investors blow heat in AFM

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Buying by foreign investors coupled with positive political developments in the region last week gave a boost to trading and prices in the Amman Financial Market (AFM) this week after three weeks of stagnation, brokers said Sunday.

The main market indicator, the official AFM general price index, closed on Sunday at 142.24, up 0.47 points, or 0.31 points. On Saturday, the index gained 1.1 points, or 0.79 per cent to close at 141.79 points over the week's opening of 140.66 points.

Volume of trading was around JD 915,000 on Saturday.

The over one per cent gain in prices in two days was attributed to several factors by brokers. They said the decline in prices in the last three weeks appeared to have prompted foreign investors to buy and this interest was immediately translated into the increase in prices.

The increases were brought about by investors who anticipated foreign capital interest in some of the stock and rushed to acquire them, brokers added.

But, said a broker, "the foreign buyers are very picky and choosy. They are focusing on blue chip shares and it is unlikely that they would turn to others in the short term."

However, the very entry of foreign capital, regardless of its volume, was taken by local investors as a positive sign, the broker added.

Investors have been complaining in private that foreign investors, who have secured government approval to enter the market, were not coming in as they expected earlier and this had led to a dampening of an initial enthusiasm which drove up prices early last year.

"It is largely unrealistic to expect foreign investors to pump in millions of dollars into the Jordanian market and somehow allow local investors to make money," said a market analyst. "One has to remember that a foreign investor is looking at involvement in markets all over the world and would only get into a market when he is sure of reaping better returns than any other options."

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ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR 12/22/1995

COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	NEW CLOSING PRICE
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK / NEW MIDDLE EAST INVESTMENT BANK	1000	4.240	4.220
THE HOUSING BANK	1000	6.000	6.050
JORDAN KOWAT BANK	1000	2.990	3.000
JORDAN GULF BANK	1000	1.435	1.460
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	1000	3.770	3.780
JORDAN INVESTMENT & FINANCE BANK	1000	4.170	4.050
ARAB BANK FOR INVESTMENT	1000	1.300	1.320
ARAB BANKING CORPORATION/JORDAN	1000	4.000	4.000
PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK	1000	1.450	1.450
BANKS SECTOR	97583	111.492	112.295
JORDAN FRENCH INSURANCE	1000	478	478
INSURANCE SECTOR	1000	478	478
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	38900	58124	58124
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER / NEW	38900	58124	58124
ARAB INTERNATIONAL HOTELS	500	238	238
JORDAN NATIONAL SHIPPING LINES	44950	51850	51850
THE INDUSTRIAL COMMERCIAL & AGRICULTURAL	1000	4140	4140
UNITED MIDDLE EAST & COMMODORE HOTELS	600	1428	1428
ARAB INTER. FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	22200	8125	8125
SERVICES SECTOR	96212	222295	222295
JORDAN TOBACCO & CIGARETTES	1000	2947	2947
THE JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES	1000	2947	2947
JORDAN POTASH/NEW	1000	5000	5000
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINERY	1000	5084	5084
THE INDUSTRIAL COMMERCIAL & AGRICULTURAL	1000	4140	4140
THE JORDAN WORTED MILLS	1000	15200	15200
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	1000	58430	58430
RAPHA INDUSTRIES	1000	2550	2550
DAR AL DAWA DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT	1000	52114	52114
ARAB INVESTMENT & INTERNATIONAL TRADE	1000	8413	8413
ARAB ALUMINUM INDUSTRY	1000	25745	25745
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	1000	14889	14889
ARAB PAPER CONVERTING & TRADING	1000	3186	3186
INTERMEDIATE PETRO-CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	1000	4225	4225
JORDAN ROPEWORK INDUSTRIES	1000	5037	5037
JORDAN INDUSTRIES & MACHINERY	1000	1652	1652
JORDAN SULPHO-CHEMICALS	1000	1720	1720
ARAB CENTER FOR PHARM. & CHEMICALS	1000	2680	2680
UNIVERSAL MODERN INDUSTRIES	1000	2580	2580
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES CO.	1000	8000	8000
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR	86448	252508	252508
GRAND TOTAL	234402	586771	586771

NO. OF TRADED SHARES IN PARALLEL MARKET: 158810

VALUE TRADED IN PARALLEL MARKET: 206923

Morocco to export oil shale to Israel power plant

RABAT (R) — Morocco will export a consignment of bituminous shale to Israel in an experiment to produce cheap electricity, a Moroccan weekly reported Friday.

The deal is the first to be concluded since Morocco became the second Arab country after Egypt to establish official ties with Israel.

The economic weekly La Vie Economique said the accord was signed between the state utility office National d'Electricite and Israel's state-owned company PAMA.

The project involves the export of 300-400 tonnes of shale — rock from which oil can be extracted — from three sites in Morocco to a pilot plant in Israel. The newspaper did not say how much the Israelis would pay for the shale.

If Israel finds it can produce electricity cheaply enough from the shale, it will start a large-scale project and import larger quantities of it from Morocco.

Morocco has shale deposits estimated at around 120 million tonnes, of which 80 million tonnes are found in Tarfaya on the Atlantic coast.

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Financial Markets

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U.S. Dollar in International Markets

New York Closing Rates for Major Currencies Against the U.S. Dollar

Currency	3/2/95	10/2/95	Percent Change
Sterling Pound	1.5635	1.5635	0.00%
Deutsche Mark	1.5270	1.5140	0.85%
Swiss Franc	1.2935	1.2823	0.87%
French Franc	5.2930	5.2585	0.65%
Japanese Yen	99.85	98.90	0.95%

LND Per 100

Euro-Currency Interest Rates

Currency	3/2/1995	10/2/1995
U.S. Dollar	6.06	6.93
Sterling Pound	6.56	7.69
Deutsche Mark	4.67	5.63
Swiss Franc	3.50	4.37
French Franc	5.43	6.56
Japanese Yen	0.21	0.42

Interest rates for 100% deposits in U.S. Dollars (London or equivalent)

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin

Date: 12/2/1995

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.7080	0.7080
Sterling Pound	1.0495	1.0499
Deutsche Mark	0.4602	0.4625
Swiss Franc	0.5435	0.5462
French Franc	0.1330	0.1337
Japanese Yen	0.7069	0.7104
Dutch Guilder	0.4107	0.4123
Swedish Krona	0.0434	0.0436
Italian Lira	0.0434	0.0436
Belgian Franc	0.0434	0.0436

* Per 100

NBA All-Star weekend

Miner wins slam-dunk contest; Rice takes 3-point shootout

PHOENIX (AP) — Harold Miner cut toward the basket from the left side, spun 180 degrees, lowered the ball to his knees and slammed it backward through the basket.

Miner calls it his "double-pump reverse" jam, a move he's been using since his teens, and it led the Miami Heat guard to his second NBA slam-dunk title in three years Saturday night.

"I bring it way down, as far as I can bring it, and throw it behind my ears," Miner said. "That's one that I've kind of depended on in dunk contests in the past."

Miner started off his final-round routine with that dunk. His second was a flying left-handed jam, and he completed his set with a 360-degree spin and slam.

In the first round, he slammed in one shot with his left hand on the rebound of a ball off the backboard. On another-round dunk that brought the crowd to its feet, he cupped the ball with his left wrist and whirled in the air before jamming it in.

Rap music and on-court commentary by actor-singer Sinbad provided the background for a competition that — with the exception of Miner's dunks and two by defending champion Isaiah Rider — failed to excite the fans or the rows of NBA peers watching the dunkers.

There was little of the artistry that Michael Jordan and Dominique Wilkins provided in the competition's early years. This time, it was all about power.

"I tried to throw them down hard, that's what I try to do on all my dunks," said the 1.96 metres Miner. "Judges like to see power from someone my size."

The judges were all former NBA stars — Julius Erving, George Gervin, Connie Hawkins, Lou Hudson and Maurice Lucas.

Miner scored 49.2 of a possible 50 points in the first round and had 46 points in the final against Rider of the Minnesota Timberwolves and Utah Jazz rookie Jamie Watson.

Miner hit three of his four dunks in the finals, while Rider hit two of four and Watson made just one of four. That meant the top three NBA dunkers hit just 50 per cent of their jams.

Tony Dumas of Dallas, Antonio Harvey of the Los Angeles Lakers and Tim Perry of Philadelphia were eliminated in the first round.

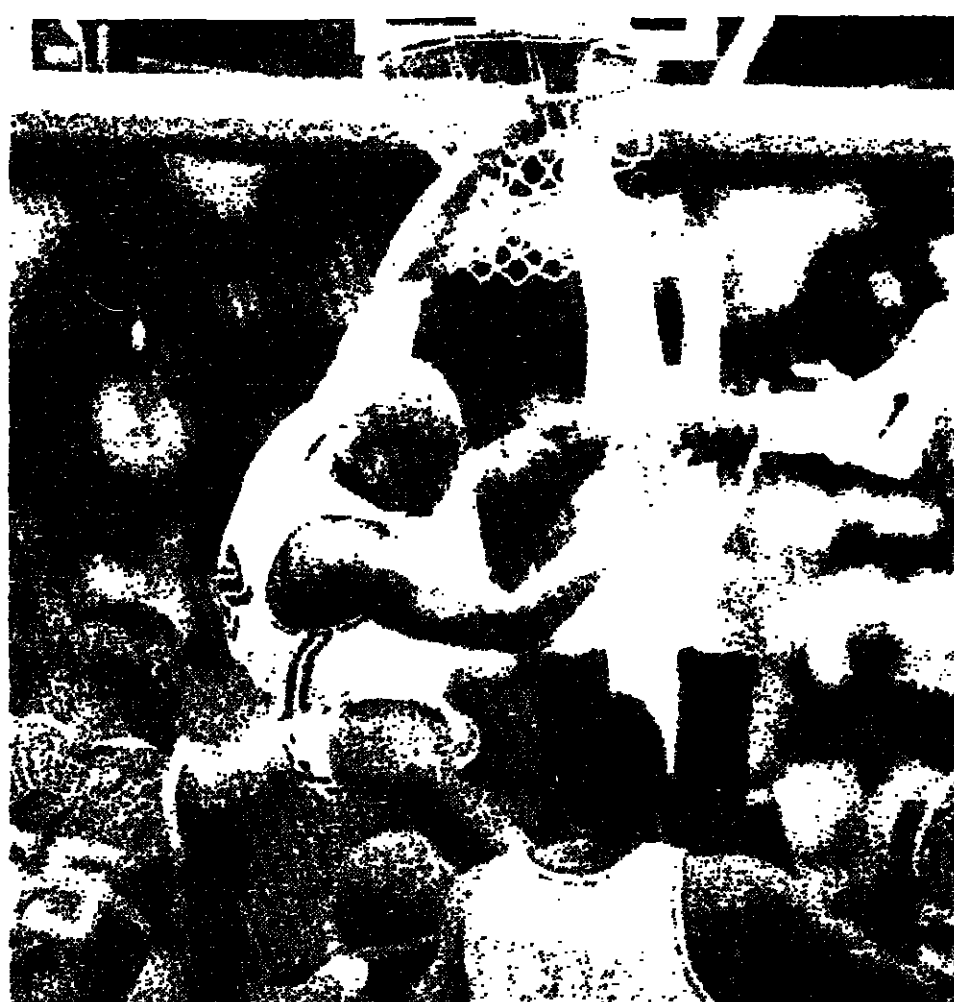
Miner won the slam-dunk competition as a rookie in 1993, but was unable to defend his title last year because of injury.

Rice wins 3-point shootout

Glen Rice was a surprise winner of a shorter, but not necessarily better, long distance shootout.

Rice, a seventh-place finisher in his only previous appearance in the shootout, because the NBA's 3-point shooting champion Saturday night.

He outscored favourite Reggie Miller 17-16 in the final round, matching the third-lowest final-round total in the event's 10-year history. The eight competitors took 25 shots in each round of the 3-point distance of 6.7 metres, 53 cms less than in



Harold Miner, the NBA's slam-dunk champion in one of his acrobatic moves

previous years. Mark Price, who won the event the last two all-star weekends, missed this year's shootout because of a broken wrist. He scored 24 points in the finals a year ago from the longer distance.

Previously, the winner of the final round scored 16 points on two occasions — Larry Bird in 1987 and Craig Hodges in 1992.

Both Bird and Hodges won the event three times, with Bird scored 22 points in the 1986 finals and Hodges a record 25 in the first round that same year. No one scored more than 19 in any round this year.

Both Miller, who dazzled NBA fans with his 3-point shooting in last year's playoffs with Indiana Pacers and last summer's world championships for the United States, and Rice scored 19 points in the semifinals. Rice, who has made 43.9 per cent of his 3-pointers this season, was the last of four qualifiers after the first round. He scored 14 points, while Scott Burrell had 19, Miller 17, and Chuck Person 15.

Rice made his only other appearance in the long distance shootout in 1991, dropping out after one round with nine points.

Eastern Conference led by new group of young stars

There's a changing of the NBA All-Star guard in the Eastern Conference.

Perennial All-Stars such as Michael Jordan and Isaiah Thomas have retired. Dominique Wilkins didn't make the team and Mark Price is injured. With that group gone, the National Basketball Association All-Star game belongs to a crop of new players — Shaquille O'Neal, Arnette Hardaway and Grant Hill.

Five first-time All-Stars will play for the Eastern Con-

ference: Orlando's Hardaway, Detroit's Hill, Milwaukee's Vin Baker, Philadelphia's Dana Barros and Cleveland's Tyrone Hill. Indiana's Reggie Miller is an All-Star for the first time since 1990 and was voted a starter this time.

Even the coach — Orlando's Brian Hill — is new. "It's a new age now," Hardaway said. "Everybody's looking for something new and we want to give them something new."

The new faces reflect the changing balance of power in the conference. Orlando, atop the Atlantic Division, has the conference's best record at 37-10, and Charlotte leads the Central Division at 31-17.

The retirement of Jordan, Thomas and Larry Bird left a void that was filled with a record seven first-time All-Stars for last year's game at Minneapolis. Only one of that group — Charlotte's Alonzo Mourning — is back this year.

"I think maybe the coaches wanted to recognise some other young players who are making outstanding contributions to their teams," Brian Hill said.

Wilkins, who appeared in nine straight All-Star games for the Atlanta Hawks, didn't make it in his first year as a Boston Celtic. His shooting percentage and scoring averages are down, and he was recently moved from Boston's starting lineup.

Chicago's Scottie Pippen, last year's Most Valuable Player, was voted a starter again, but it could be his last year representing the Bulls. Unhappy on a sub-500 Chicago team and feuding bitterly with general manager Jerry Krause, Pippen is demanding a trade.

Even though O'Neal has played in every All-Star game since joining the league in 1992-93, this one will be his showcase. He's the league's

leading scorer with a 29.7 average and brings a new assortment of offensive skills with him.

After a 2-for-12 shooting performance in last year's game, O'Neal has a point to make and has a Magic teammate to get him the ball.

In his second season, Hardaway has developed into a point guard in the mold of Magic Johnson, using his 2.01-metre size to post up smaller guards. He and O'Neal should be teaming up in many All-Star games to come.

Grant Hill, the rookie who led the league in All-Star voting by the fans, is a player the NBA loves to promote as a role model, and he's excelling on the court as well. Despite missing 12 games due to a foot injury, Hill has shown the same versatility and defensive toughness as Pippen.

"He can dominate this league," fellow All-Star and Pistons teammate Joe Dumars said, "and for years to come, he'll be one of the top five players in the league, year in and year out."

Barros' arrival at the All-Star game marks the culmination of six years of trying to find his place. Used as a shooting guard in four seasons with Seattle, Barros didn't have a chance to prove himself as a point guard until this season.

Now he's scoring more than 20 points, per game. More importantly, he has 7.4 assists per game, compared to only 2.9 turnovers.

"I don't know how I got over the hump," Barros said. "I don't think it will hit me until I'm in the locker room with Reggie Miller and Shaquille O'Neal."

Despite playing in the shadow of top draft pick Glenn Robinson, Baker has drawn notice in his second season, averaging 17.6 points and 10.4 rebounds for the Bucks.

United thrash City rivals to go back on top

LONDON (AFP) — Reigning champions Manchester United scored three times in twenty minutes against their old rivals Manchester City to return to the top of the Premiership for the first time in ten weeks at Maine Road Saturday.

Goals from Paul Ince, Andrei Kanchelskis and Andy Cole — his second in as many games — condemned City to yet another derby humiliation following their 5-0 defeat at Old Trafford last November.

But their supremacy may be short-lived as second placed Blackburn play their game-in-hand against Sheffield Wednesday at Ewood Park on Sunday.

Manchester United's victory was slightly marred by some skirmishes among rival fans. Although the clashes were nothing like the scenes witnessed after Chelsea's game against Millwall earlier in the week, Saturday's brawling will add to the worries of the English football authorities.

United's second-half display brought back memories of their two championship winning seasons and showed Blackburn they are determined to make it three titles in a row and clinch a European Cup spot for next season.

Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson threw down the gauntlet to Blackburn after seeing his side regain the Premiership leadership, saying: "We are set-

ting ourselves a target."

"We want to reach our capabilities. If we do that we will know that we'll win plenty of games."

"It was an excellent result. I was pleased with our second-half performance. We were outstanding and our football was excellent. You have to give City credit for having a go at us and for turning it into a bit of a cup-tie," he added.

Andy Cole, United record seven million pounds striker, created United's first goal 12 minutes after the break when he passed the ball to Ince who scored his third goal of the season.

Kanchelskis, whose hat-trick had destroyed City last November, settled for just one goal this time — scoring the second after 74 minutes.

Cole made it two goals in two games three minutes later to round off a good all round performance.

City were simply outplayed after the break and rarely troubled United keeper Peter Schmeichel, whose only real save came early on when he pushed a Paul Walsh effort round for a corner.

The defeat — extending their run to 10 league games without a win — will only increase the pressure on Horton with Ron Atkinson and Steve Coppell, keen to get back into management, both being linked with his job.

City boss Brian Horton could only pay tribute to United: "They are like a machine now. They are like

the Liverpool of old. They know what they are doing."

Arsenal's season of woe continued with a disappointing draw with relegation-threatened Leicester, enlightened only by Paul Merson's first goal since his return from treatment in a drugs re-habilitation clinic.

However, Merson's joy was overshadowed by reports that manager George Graham was going to leave Arsenal on Monday.

But Graham reacted angrily to the rumours, saying: "Thanks for the news but it's something that I don't know anything about."

The biggest win on Saturday came at resurgent Aston Villa who thrashed Wimbledon 7-0 with Tommy Johnson, a recent signing from Derby County by new manager Brian Little, scoring a first-half hat-trick.

Two goals from Welsh international Dean Saunders and an Alan Reeves own goal completed the rout — all the goals coming after Warren Barton gave Wimbledon an early lead.

Newcastle maintained their pursuit of a place in Europe and made it a miserable return to Tyneside for Forest boss Frank Clark, as he saw his side go down 2-1.

Keegan said: "This was a game that, if we won, we could see a bit of a gap opening up between us and the other teams going for Europe. It was important to win."

Jackson runs fastest time of year

GLASGOW (AP) — Colin Jackson bounced back from his first defeat for 18 months to post the fastest 60 metres hurdles time of the year Saturday, clocking 7.39 to edge countryman Tony Jarrett.

At the same meet, world and Olympic 100 metre champion Linford Christie clocked the second fastest time this year over 60 metres.

Beaten by American hurdler Allen Johnson in Madrid on Thursday, his first loss in 44 races, Jackson, a Welshman who is world champion and record holder over 110 metres outdoors, was quickest off the blocks and beat Jerrett, the world championship silver medalist, on the dip to the line.

Both Britons were competing on the same team in an international match against France at Glasgow's Kelvin Hall. Jarrett clocked 7.44, trying his own English record, and the closest French hurdler, Vincent Clarico, was 0.39 behind Jackson in third place, a big margin in such a short race.

Christie appeared to be last off the blocks but made up for that with his typical mid-race burst to win in 6.56 seconds.

The 34-year-old sprinter got past the two-Frenchmen on either side, Sebastian Carat and Needy Guims, at half way and won the race by a metre from countryman Darren Braithwaite, who was a guest runner.

Christie's time has only been beaten this season by Canadian sprinter Donovan Bailey, who clocked 6.55.

The British sprinter does not plan to run in the world indoor championships in Barcelona next month but concentrate on the outdoor season and the outdoor championships in Goteborg, Sweden, in August.

"I'm having fun running in soem of the indoor races but I'm really gearing up for the



Britain's Colin Jackson (right) points out as he crosses the finish line (AFP photo)

(outdoor) World Championships," he said.

"I find racing is more fun now compared with when I was younger and if I continue to enjoy it, that's the perfect way to get better."

Another British sprinter, John Regis, wound up fifth in that race in 6.37 and later ran the third fastest time of the year in his specialist event, the 200 metres. The powerfully-built Regis clocked 20.67 with Solomon Worsio, running for Britain for the first time since his drugs suspension, second in 21.19.

A strong British team beat the French 155 to 122 although the French won the 1,500 and 3,000 metre races, which used to be Britain's strong events.

Eric Dubus won the 1,500 metres in 3 minutes 41.66 seconds ahead of Britons Ian Grime and Grant Graham and Jacky Carlier won the men's 3,000 in 7:58.03.

Frederique Quentin won the women's 1,500 metres in 4:18.04 and Laurence Diquenoy the 3,000 in 9:20.49.

Johnson believes his record will not be beaten

Disgraced sprinter Ben Johnson believes his world record, scratched from the books because of drug-taking, will never be beaten.

Legally, that is. Johnson, twice called for taking drugs and now banned for life, clocked 9.79 for the 100 metres and won an Olympic gold medal in Seoul seven

years ago. That performance now officially doesn't exist because the 33-year-old Canadian was stripped of the medal and the record after he was caught taking steroids.

"Although it has been scrubbed from the list, I still look upon my 9.79 as the world record," Johnson told the tabloid News of the World.

The world record is held by American sprinter Leroy Burrell at 9.85 and was set last year.

"I didn't fly that day. I ran 100 metres on my own feet and the world saw it. They are desperate to beat it and that all want to say: 'I did it clean, not like Ben Johnson.' But it still goes on," Johnson was quoted as saying.

"The only way they will beat my time is if they only run 90 metres or if there is a wind speed over the limit," he said. "There is no way they will beat it legally."

Joyner-Kersey wins in Sunkist Invitational

In Los Angeles, Jackie Joyner-Kersey and Mark Gear easily won their races for the second night in a row on Saturday, although both ran a shade slower than they had 24 hours earlier.

Joyner-Kersey, a three-time Olympic gold medalist, broke out quickly and seemed to be running smoothly all the way in the women's 50-metre hurdles in the Sunkist Invitational Saturday night, hitting the tape in 6.82 seconds.

The previous evening, she rewrote her own American

Second-half goals from Ruel Fox and Robert Lee lifted this otherwise dull encounter top-of-the-table clash and put United out of reach of a negative Forest.

Forest's Jason Lee reduced the deficit, heading Des Lytle's right wing cross back across the face of Pavel Srnicek's goal.

Chelsea captain Dennis Wise-party redeemed a dismal week on and off the pitch with a headed equaliser against Tottenham at a peaceful Stamford Bridge.

Convicted of common assault and criminal damage, exiled from the England side and dumped out of the FA Cup by Millwall amid disgraceful crowd scenes, Wise has had little to smile about.

But when player-manager Glenn Hoddle delivered a cross in the 79th minute, the little winger scooped to flick the ball inside Ian Walker's right hand post, equalising Teddy Sheringham's first-half effort.

Hoddle praised Wise afterwards, saying: "I've told Dennis he has to answer people on the pitch."

Liverpool's challenge for a UEFA Cup place suffered a further setback as they could only manage a 1-1 draw at home to Queens Park Rangers.

Coventry gained their first win in twelve games as they beat fellow relegation candidates Crystal Palace 2-0, American World Cup star Cobi Jones scoring their first.

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Swimming world records tumble

SHEFFIELD (R) — American Jeff Rouse and Angela Kennedy of Australia kept the world records tumbling at the two-day Sheffield World Cup meeting Sunday.

In the heats on the closing day, Rouse clocked 24.37 seconds to set a men's 50 metres backstroke short-course record — beating the mark of 24.60 set by Frenchman Franck Schott in Paris at last year's final World Cup meeting on March 27.

Kennedy reclaimed the women's 50 metres butterfly record in her heats with a storming swim of 26.56 seconds — just 11 days after losing it to American Amy Van Dyken.

Van Dyken had clocked 26.73 in Espoo, Finland, lowering Kennedy's previous mark of 26.93.

The Sunday double hoisted the weekend world record tally at the Ponds Forge Pool to four, after Danyon Loader of New Zealand and Britain's Mark Foster set new standards in the 400 metres freestyle and 50 metres butterfly respectively on Saturday.

The performances earned \$1,500 World Cup world record bonuses, plus shares in a separate award from the Sheffield organisers.

With the closing sessions of finals in the 25-metre pool still to come, Rouse, Kennedy, Loader and Foster were each in line for a quarter of the 10,000 pounds sterling (\$15,000) on offer for setting world records.

Rouse, 25 last Monday, was well outside his own short-course world record when he won the 100 metres backstroke on Saturday.

But the swimmer from Fredericksburg, Virginia — world and Olympic silver medalist in the long-course 100 backstroke — meant business in the 50 on Sunday.

Martin Harris, Commonwealth champion at 100 backstroke and second behind Rouse in Saturday's 100, was disqualified in the 50 backstroke heats for moving at the start and was denied a British record of 24.97 seconds.

Team mate Foster, winner of three races at last weekend's Paris World Cup meeting, faced a strong challenge to his bid for another treble in Sheffield.

Winner of the 100 freestyle and 50 butterfly on Saturday, Foster qualified comfortably for the 50 freestyle final in 23.12, the fifth-fastest heat time.

But American Gary Hall, 50 and 100 freestyle silver medalist at last September's world long-course championships in Rome, was quickest qualifier in 22.87.

Loader, Saturday's other world record breaker, qualified for the 50 freestyle and 200 freestyle finals.

Sheffield is the fifth meeting in the seven-venue World Cup series. The next event is at Malmö, Sweden, on Tuesday and Wednesday, with the final meeting next weekend in Geisenkirchen, Germany.

Makinen poised to win Swedish Rally

KARLSTAD, Sweden (R) — Finland's Tommi Makinen looks set to win the Swedish Rally after heavy snow dramatically altered the leaderboard on the World Championship second-round event on Sunday.

Makinen has pulled away from Mitsubishi Team mate Kenneth Eriksson on the final day, profiting from running second through the stages, and leaving his Swedish colleague to plough tracks through fresh snow.

"Sometimes you can't even see the road and it is like aquaplaning, even on these tyres," said Eriksson.

The Mitsubishi are beyond the reach of the phalanx of Toyotas, headed by local star Thomas Rådström.

The world champion team will be content to finish and score some points, with Frenchman Didier Auriol saying: "Conditions are much

more difficult than yesterday."

It has been a wretched day for the Monte Carlo Rally-winning Subaru Team, the surviving cars driven by Britain's Colin McRae and Sweden's Mats Jonsson retiring before the first stage with engine trouble. A similar problem accounted for team leader Carlos Sainz the day before.

Belgian Bruno Thiry has driven with increasing confidence in the snow and has become the top Ford driver after Swedish team mate and former world champion Stig Blomqvist collected a four-minute time penalty.

If Makinen maintains his advantage he will take the world championship lead as well as outright victory.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Yannick Noah weds English model

PARIS (AP) — Two Rolls Royce limousines brought former tennis star and French Davis Cup captain Yannick Noah and British model Heather Stewart Whyte to their wedding Saturday in a small Brittany village. Noah, 34, and Miss Whyte arrived separately at the town hall of Saussey, making their way through a throng of photographers for the marriage ceremony, the second for Noah. The 1983 French Open champion and his bride then piled into one of the Rolls Royces to head to a nearby chateau for a dinner and late-night party. Among the guests were tennis player Guy Forget, numerous models from around the world, and Noah's two children from his first marriage, to a Swedish model. Noah captained the 1991 French Davis Cup team that defeated the United States in the final to win the title.

Bubka predicts record improvement

DONETSK, Ukraine (R) — World champion Sergei Bubka said on Saturday that his world indoor pole vault record of 6.15 metres could be improved by as much as 15 centimetres. The 31-year-old Ukrainian said: "Hitting 6.20 metres is realistic. Hitting 6.30 is also realistic. Beyond that progress depends on the nature of new poles and what they're made of. These new materials make it impossible to make any predictions." Bubka set his latest world record at the Donetsk event in 1993. He has won each of the five previous events, which he promotes, and set world records at three of them.

Italian soccer in trouble again

LUCQUES, Italy (AFP) — Trouble broke out at an amateur football match here on Saturday when sport resumed in Italy following last month's murder. Three fans were held by the police and one man was detained in hospital with a suspected broken nose. Police made several charges to break up fighting fans after the match between Pietrasanta and Grosseto finished 1-1. All sporting fixtures were cancelled last weekend after a Genoa fan was stabbed to death by an AC Milan fan. The death, which sparked off street riots, provoked nationwide outrage.

Nine-man Barcelona crash again

MADRID (AFP) — Barcelona, still reeling from their shock 4-1 home defeat against Atletico Madrid in the Spanish Cup earlier in the week, had two players sent off as they crashed to a humiliating 5-0 defeat at Racing Santander in a first division clash Saturday night. Ironically John Cruyff's side dominated the first half and had more than half a dozen chances to score. But things went haywire in the second-half which saw goalkeeper Carlos Busquets and defender Albert Ferrer sent off. Stoichkov (30), Bakero (40) and Korneiev (42) all squandered goalscoring chances for Barcelona. In the night's other match Atletico scored a comfortable 3-1 home win over Tenerife.

White Sox lose Jackson to Japan

NEW YORK (AFP) — Darrin Jackson signed a \$3.5 million, one-year contract with the Seibu Lions of Japan on Saturday after failing to agree to terms with the Chicago White Sox baseball team. "He's very happy about the opportunity to go," said Jackson's agent, Alan Meersand. Jackson, who became a free agent in October, hit .312 with 10 home runs and 51 runs batted in last season. Meersand said the White Sox offer was just too low. "He never really wanted to leave the White Sox, but they refused to pay him market value," Meersand said.

22 Malaysian players to be banished

KUALA LUMPUR (AP) — Twenty soccer players and two coaches are expected to be exiled to remote areas of Malaysia next month in connection with the nation's biggest sports bribery and match-fixing scandal. Deputy home minister Megat Majid Megat Ayob said warrants for their arrest would be issued a few days after the end of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan on March 3 and 4.

Chang downs Courier to reach final

SAN JOSE (R) — Top seed Andre Agassi and second seed Michael Chang, who have been playing each other since childhood, advanced to a final round showdown at the \$328,000 San Jose Open.

Second-ranked Agassi continued his assault on the number one spot with a 6-4 6-2 semifinal victory over fifth seed Malivai Washington Saturday.

A determined Chang, ranked sixth in the world, fought back from 1-4 down in the third set to pull out an exciting 4-6 7-6 (7-5) 6-4 victory over third seed Jim Courier in the other all-American semifinal.

"You know what to expect with Michael," Agassi said of the player he has been battling since juniors and who he beat en route to his U.S. Open title last September.

"He's the fastest guy on the tour and covers a lot of real estate out here. He's not going to give you anything and that's always tough."

"But I feel I have a little bit more firepower than him from the ground," Agassi said, assessing his chances.

Chang dropped the opening set to Courier's punishing ground stroking game, highlighted by a ferocious forehand.

But the two-time champion here regrouped and took the second set tie-break, aided by his much improved serve, which produced consecutive aces to force a third set.

The two exchanged early breaks in the deciding set and Courier came up with another service break in the fourth game on his way to a 4-1 third-set lead.

But Chang, who never gives up no matter what the deficit, is not one to let one service break get him down.

The second seed came roaring back, taking five straight games from the 11th-ranked Courier to clinch a place in the final after two hours and 14 minutes.

"We had some tired points, some very long points," said Chang. "He was moving me all over the place and I was moving him all over the place."

Courier, who knows Chang almost as well as Agassi, is still impressed by his fighting spirit.

"He picked up his game and put a little pressure on me, and got back into the match," said the former number one.

"He doesn't give up. Everybody should be like that." Agassi, who is coming off a tremendous Australian Open victory over world number one Pete Sampras, did not show the form that made him champion in Melbourne, until midway through the first set Saturday.

"I wasn't feeling comfortable with the way the match was going until I broke him



Michael Chang returns a double-handed backhand

for 5-2. Then I found myself controlling everything," said Agassi after the 68-minute victory over the 40th-ranked Washington.

Chang is looking forward to renewing his rivalry with the hottest player in the world.

"I'm excited to play Andre, obviously," Chang said.

"I'm sure he'll be pumped up for tomorrow, and you can be sure I'll be pumped up as well."

Maleeva beats Sabatini

In Chicago, third-seeded Magdalena Maleeva took advantage of 14 double faults to beat second-seeded Gabriela Sabatini 6-4, 4-6, 6-3 on Saturday and advance to the finals of the Ameritech Cup tennis tournament.

Maleeva will meet the winner of the evening match between the seventh seed, Zina Garrison-Jackson, and Lisa Raymond in the title match on Sunday.

The 11th-ranked Maleeva utilised a vicious two handed backhand to capture the first set, breaking Sabatini in the second game.

Sabatini broke Maleeva in the ninth game of the set with a great scoop passing shot to trail 5-4, only to give away the set with a double fault on set point in the 10th game.

In the second set, Sabatini took a 5-4 lead when Maleeva hit a return out of bounds and then won it with a 157 kph service winner on set point.

The match turned in the sixth game of the third set, when Sabatini double-faulted twice in losing her serve to fall behind 4-2.

The match ended when Sabatini netted a return. The fact that the crowd in

the UIC pavilion was solidly behind Sabatini didn't bother Maleeva.

"In Bulgaria, they do not cheer for me either," she said. "If I'm in Germany, they cheer for the Germans, and it is no different in the states. Gabby is a crowd-pleaser."

not having played Sabatini before on the WTA tour "did not bother me," Maleeva said. "I did have to hit balls deeper to keep her away from the net."

Maleeva, 19, has no fear following her sisters, Manuela and Katerina, into pro tennis. "I will be better than my sisters; I've been told that by mother and others."

Sabatini called the youngest Maleeva "a very good player, but I was very tired. She served very well, especially at the end. Today I didn't serve very well. I didn't feel very comfortable."

But in tennis today, you have to be prepared to play a very tough first round. You can never take it easy."

Becker makes Marseille finals

In Marseille, France, Boris Becker needed a bit more than an hour to gain the finals of the \$506,000 Marseille Open tennis tournament by beating Frenchman Olivier Delaitre 6-4, 6-2 Saturday.

Becker takes on Czech Daniel Vacek in Sunday's final. Vacek beat another Frenchman, Lionel Roux, 6-1, 7-5 in the other semifinal.

Becker will be playing in his 64th career final, while it is the second for Vacek. Becker has 42 career titles.

Sanchez upset Ferreira's rhythm by breaking in the opening game for a 1-0 lead and once again in the vital ninth game for 5-2. The Spaniard however failed to hold his serve in the next, falling to a Ferreira forehand shot that ended a long baseline rally.

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Neither vulnerable. North deals.

NORTH
♠ A 10 9 6
♥ 6 5 2
♦ Q 8 5
♣ J 10 8

WEST
♠ J 8 7 3
♥ K 7 4
♦ 10 9 3 2
♣ 8 3

EAST
♠ K 5
♥ Q 10 9 5 3
♦ 7 6 4
♣ A 5 2

SOUTH
♠ Q 4 2
♥ A J
♦ A K J
♣ K Q 9 7 4

The bidding:
North East South West
Pass Pass 2 NT Pass
3 NT Pass Pass Pass
Opening lead: Three of ♠

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The auction is immaterial. Three no trump should be reached no matter what bidding methods you use. If you don't get there, consider changing your system.

West leads a low spade. At rubber bridge, you have no problem. Since you would not like East to gain the lead and shift to a heart, you rise with the ace of spades, force out the

ace of clubs and you have at least nine tricks no matter how the defense progresses.

What about at duplicate? Nine tricks are not the problem. But you won't be very happy with nine tricks when the rest of the field is making 10 or 11 by putting in the nine of spades on the opening lead. If West has led away from the king, overtricks are sure. Unfortunately, if you choose to play low, East will win the king and the shift to a heart is obvious. The result—down two.

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Jordan to give priority to 'stranded Palestinians'

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan will give priority to ensuring the return home of several thousand Palestinians "stranded" in Jordan during talks this month on the repatriation of Palestinians displaced during the 1967 war, according to senior officials and negotiators.

The estimated 60,000 to 80,000 Palestinians are different from the 900,000 or so Palestinians classified as "displaced" during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, the official explained.

The Israeli occupation authorities have denied them entry to their homeland after their post-1967 Israeli-issued permits expired.

"They cannot be classified as displaced persons since they were not displaced. They were permanent residents of the occupied territories even after the 1967 war whose exit and entry permits expired while they were outside their homeland," said a senior official.

"When you discuss the subject with the Israelis, they show all enthusiasm and you get a feeling that things would be done quickly," said the official. "But we have seen little practical action despite our repeated efforts," added the official, who preferred anonymity.

According to a Jordanian negotiator with Israel, most of these people were either studying in Jordan or elsewhere, expatriates in the Gulf or visitors to the Kingdom or other countries who could not return to the West Bank before their permits expired.

"The whole idea of de-

nying them entry is ridiculous," added the negotiator, who also spoke on condition of anonymity. "But then, we have to deal with the reality that it is better to look forward and seek a solution to the problem rather than engage in polemics."

According to the official and the negotiator, Jordan will focus on the return home of this category of Palestinians as a priority during a meeting in Amman this month of Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa and Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) political department head Farouk Kadoumi.

"It is clear that the return of these people would not pose any social or housing problems in the West Bank since they were living there until recent years," noted the negotiator, referring to Israel's argument against allowing the return of large numbers of Palestinians.

The Arab sides to the talks met in Cairo early this month in a bid to coordinate their stands ahead of the meeting with Israel. Details of the coordinated strategy have not been revealed except that the three — Jordan, Egypt and the PLO — had drawn up specific proposals and timetables for the return of the displaced.

Under the Sept. 13, 1993, declaration of principles signed by Israel and the PLO, the issue of "displaced" Palestinians will be discussed and resolved among the four parties.

Article XII of the declaration of principles states under the heading Liaison and

cooperation with Jordan and Egypt:

"The two parties will invite the governments of Jordan and Egypt to participate in establishing further liaison and cooperation arrangements between the government of Israel and the Palestinian representatives, on the one hand, and the governments of Jordan and Egypt, on the other hand, to promote cooperation between them. These arrangements will include the constitution of a continuing (permanent) committee that will decide by agreement on the modalities of admission of persons displaced from the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967, together with necessary measures to prevent disruption and disorder, other matters of common concern will be dealt with in this committee."

The Jordanian negotiator said the Kingdom "fully agreed with the stipulation that measures should be taken to prevent disruption and disorder" as the displaced return home. "We are as anxious as anyone to ensure that order is maintained throughout the process," said the negotiator.

Jordanian officials note that His Majesty King Hussein has repeatedly affirmed that no Jordanian of Palestinian origin would be forced to make a choice between returning to the West Bank or remaining in the Kingdom. "It is a matter of free will and choice of the individual concerned, and Jordan would not ask anyone to leave the country or deny anyone the right to leave the Kingdom as and when such a choice is available," said the official.



Palestinians wait at the Ibrahim Mosque in Hebron, hoping to be allowed in during the day's quota

Separation plan ready — Shahal

The Jerusalem Post

THE PLAN to separate Israel from the Palestinians has been completed and will be presented to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by the end of the month, Police Minister Moshe Shahal told political reporters last week, after attending the Rabin and Arafat meeting.

Shahal said the separation line will divide Israeli and Palestinian, but will not "indicate the future permanent line, or lead to political confrontations that will hinder the talks with the Palestinians."

The separation plan will enable stricter supervision of the Palestinians who enter Israel, without having to resort to closure, he said. Shahal noted, however, that a hermetic sealing of the territories is impossible, and warned that while terrorist attacks will be reduced, they cannot be stopped altogether.

Shahal said the separation line is not along the 1967 borders, and takes into consideration settlements such as Oranit and Arab villages that

the green line separated arbitrarily.

Shahal denied reports of an impasse in the talks between Israel and the PLO, and said it was possible to overcome the difficult ties. He said Rabin impressed on Arafat that terrorist attacks make it impossible to advance the autonomy agreement.

Shahal added: "Meanwhile, Environment Minister Yossi Sarid said last night that building a separation fence south of the Jewish settlements in the northern Gaza Strip would be a violation of the Cairo agreement, and is therefore out of the question."

However, residents of Dugit, Nissim and Eilei Sinai say they will still be exposed to terror attacks if the fence is built to the north. This is why they have asked that an electronic separation fence be constructed to the south of their settlements. They said the fence would be similar to the one built west of Sha'ar Haneggev and Gush Eshkol, which has ensured the security of those residents.

COLUMN

Japanese 'peace cyclists' tour massacre sites

MANILA (AP) — At the end of World War II, beleaguered Japanese troops massacred thousands of civilians in Manila and provinces south of the capital. On Sunday, 50 years later, a group of Japanese peace advocates bicycled to the same provinces to condemn the atrocities — and also what they call Japan's current "economic invasion" of the Philippines. "These communities may not be confronting the same armed aggression, but Japan's economic aggression is just as bad," Solidarity for People's Power, a Filipino group working with the Japanese "peace cyclists," said in a statement. The seven cyclists set out from Raza Park in downtown Manila Sunday amid cheers by a handful of Filipino activists angry at what they termed "Japan's imperialist designs." They rode first to Calamba town in Laguna, 48 kilometres (30 miles) southeast of Manila, where thousands of Filipinos were said to have been killed by bayonet by Japanese soldiers on Feb. 12, 1945, and buried in mass graves. From Calamba, they were to cycle on to nearby Los Banos, where two Japanese generals, Tomoyuki Yamashita and Masaharu Homma, were executed by the Americans as war criminals. The University of the Philippines campus in Los Banos is also the burial site of hundreds of Filipino and American soldiers killed in the war.

Irish exam date changed to stop children drinking

DUBLIN (R) — The date when Irish school students get examination results is to be changed — to stop them getting so drunk. Irish Education Minister Niamh Ni Bhreathnach has ordered that results of the junior school certificate for 16-year-olds be made public on a Tuesday this year, rather than a Thursday. Thursday is widely seen as the start of the Irish weekend and ministry officials believe there is less risk of students going out on the town on a Tuesday night than a Thursday. Ireland's Association of Secondary Schoolteachers welcomed the announcement but urged parents to lay on something more appropriate than a night in a pub to celebrate or commiserate. Association President Sean Higgins said: "Those involved now have a unique opportunity to put alternative proposals in place that would find favour with the students." The Thursday night festivities have often been marked by raucous pub scenes in Dublin and elsewhere.

Robbers totting grenade launcher steal \$660,000

HAMBURG, Germany (R) — Two men wielding a grenade launcher and a rifle robbed an armoured security van in the town of Brunswick and got away with about one million marks (\$660,000), police said. The masked men rammed the van Friday with their all-terrain vehicle as it was leaving a supermarket and forced the guards to open the van's vault before making off with 45 sacks of money. Neither guard was injured in the attack.

Argentine cops nab 98-year-old granny in drug bust

MAR DEL PLATA, Argentina (AFP) — At 98 and relaxing in a retirement home, she looked harmless enough. But police in this resort town moved in to arrest the aged Italian national for international drug running. Authorities did not identify the low-profile lady they sought to haul in on a tip from Interpol, and at the request of Italian officials. She however had the misfortune of sharing the same sex and national origin as the real suspect, aged 60, who also lives in this beach-city 400 kilometres (250 miles) south of Buenos Aires. Certain that they had zeroed in on their perpetrator, police showed up at the retirement home and tried to arrest the woman and remove her from the premises.

EU plans summit to boost Mideast role

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — In a bid to further strengthen its role in the Middle East peace process, the European Union (EU) is preparing for a European Mediterranean economic summit to be held in November in Barcelona, Spain.

A French diplomat told the Jordan Times on Sunday the EU hopes the conference would come up with pledges totalling \$6.6 billion for aid and development in the Mediterranean region. The conference will bring together 15 European and 11 Mediterranean countries.

There is no fixed date for the conference but it is expected to be held in November this year.

"We will participate effectively in the conference in contrast with Casablanca summit where we didn't take part in its preparations," a European official said.

The aid package of \$6.6 billion comes as part of the European Union's endeavour

to encourage joint projects between Europe and Mediterranean countries, the French official said. It is also aimed at bolstering the economies of the countries in the region.

According to the official, France also submitted a proposal to the European Union to allocate \$600 million in financial aid to countries participating in the peace process, mainly Jordan, Israel, the Palestinians and Egypt. The assistance will be directed mainly towards financing joint economic projects between countries in the region, but will be separate from the allotted \$6.6 billion to all participating Mediterranean countries to the Barcelona conference.

"The EU plans to play a key role in ensuring the conference's success," the official said.

The EU pledged \$570 million in aid to the Palestinians over five years — about a sixth of the total international aid package. French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe said in

Beirut last week that \$117 million had been already spent on education and health. Another 20 million European Currency Units (\$24 million) will be allotted to projects in Jordan, informed sources said.

"The EU is keen on maintaining strong ties with Jordan. Europe appreciates Jordan's endeavours and its leading role in the region," the official said.

One of the main objectives of the conference, European officials say, is to establish a free trade zone in the Middle East whereby European-Mediterranean commercial exchange will be enhanced. Officials say the conference also aims at enhancing bilateral relations in the political and cultural fields.

"The planned economic conference will present a good opportunity to further enhance European-Jordanian relations," the official said. In a press briefing, on Saturday, Denis Bouchard, head of the North Africa and Middle East department at

the French Foreign Ministry, also said Europe's role in the Middle East "should not be neglected, but should go hand in hand with that of the United States."

"We support the U.S. in all its endeavours to achieve peace but there are historic and political links between the Middle East and Europe," said Mr. Bouchard, a former ambassador to Jordan. "Our role is complementary to that of the Americans," he added.

Mr. Bouchard arrived here earlier in the day to brief officials on a regional tour by three EU foreign ministers to discuss aid to Palestinians and help resolve the deadlock in Israel's negotiations with Syria and Lebanon. He said the delegation also extended an invitation to Syrian President Hafez Al Assad to attend the economic meeting in Spain.

Chechens say 250 Russians killed in blast

MOSCOW (Agencies) — The Chechen government said Sunday that its forces had killed nearly 250 Russian troops by setting off an explosion at a former missile site at Alkhan-Kala, southwest of Grozny, a radio station said.

Chechen presidential spokesman Movlad Udugov said the area the Russians were trying to capture was mined, the Moscow Echo radio station said.

The blast, in which 24 tanks were destroyed, was the work of Chechen separatist fighters, he added. The spokesman did not say when it occurred.

The report could not be immediately confirmed by independent sources.

Mr. Udugov said a "sniper war" was raging in the centre of Grozny where he reported

fighting around the key southern junction at Minutka Square, belying Russian government claims that fighting had eased in the region over the weekend.

The minister said Chechen independence fighters controlled southern and southwestern districts of Grozny including Aldy and Chernorechiye. He also reported Russian air raids and shelling on the towns of Alkhan-Yurt and Alkhan-Kala, a few kilometres further out on the road southwest of Grozny.

Earlier Sunday, Chechenya's military leaders backed a call for ceasefire talks as Russian forces continued shelling villages on the southern outskirts of Grozny.

Russian aircraft stepped up high-altitude reconnaissance

flights over the region — an apparent prelude to more bombing aimed at driving Chechen secessionist rebels out of the area.

The rebels largely abandoned the defence of Grozny earlier this week, and fanned out into nearby villages which then became the targets of intense Russian artillery and bombing attacks.

At the rebel stronghold of Shali east of Grozny the Chechen military commander, General Aslan Maskhadov, gave his backing to proposed talks with Russia for a ceasefire.

Speaking to AFP, Gen. Maskhadov said the Chechen military command was ready for negotiations on a ceasefire and an exchange of prisoners, as proposed by the vice-president of Ingushetia,

Boris Agapov.

Gen. Maskhadov signed a document on Sunday which said: "The Chechen military command is ready to negotiate on any level with the Russian military command about halting military activities and an exchange of prisoners."

Gen. Maskhadov said: "We gave our agreement. That means negotiations will happen."

Pyotr Kosov, adviser to Ingush President Ruslan Aushev, said he had already spoken to a senior Russian general about the proposed ceasefire.

"I'm going to call him with news of the (Chechen) agreement. Now it's all up to the Russian side," Mr. Kosov said.

Rome call parties urge Algiers to change stand

ALGIERS (Agencies) — Signatories to last month's Rome accord calling for mediation of the three-year violent standoff between the government and Islamic militants asked Algiers on Sunday to modify its strong opposition to the agreement which it rejected as interference in the country's affairs.

In a joint press conference in the capital, representatives of the groups who signed the accord called on Algiers to "revise its position and to take measures (to establish) a serious dialogue with opposition forces."

They also said the government bore a "heavy responsibility" for the ongoing unrest in Algeria by rejecting the accord and pursuing a "policy of confrontation for more than three years... losing another opportunity (to find) a solution to the crisis."

Some 30,000 people have died in violence since the government in January 1992 cancelled elections the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) fundamentalists were poised to win.

"The platform proposed is not an instrument of confrontation between the gov-

ernment and the opposition... it is a responsible proposition for a return to peace to serenity (and) a global political solution to the crisis," the representatives said.

In addition, the group, including Abdul Kader Bouhamkham and Ali Djeddi of the FIS — both released from custody a year ago — called on the Algerian people to back their mediation drive encapsulated by the Rome meeting sponsored by an Italian Catholic group. "We appeal to the Algerian people... and to political parties, associations, organisations and national personalities to back the (Rome) platform and support this initiative for a return to peace and the popular will," delegates at Sunday's meeting said.

They also said that parties backing the peace accord would respond individually to a presidential memorandum regarding the holding of a presidential election and express their opposition to the poll.

President Liamine Zeroual last October intimated an election could be held some time after July and called on

"legal" political parties (excluding the banned FIS) wanting to participate to respond by Saturday to the memorandum on the issue.

But the Rome accord signatories said Sunday although "we are agreed on the principle of a real return to the public will (via a poll)" they were "against a unilateral decision (by the authorities) which will not be enough to drag the country out of crisis."

In addition, the Rome signatories said the government's "confrontational policy" had only aggravated the crisis politically, economically and socially.

Other parties among a total of eight to sign the Rome agreement were the Socialist Force Front (FFS) and the former ruling National Liberation Front (FLN).

The accord had called for conditional negotiations with Mr. Zeroual and included a commitment by signatories to embrace democracy, allowing elections to be held once violence had been halted.

Fatma-Zohra Rais, 47, at Al Biar, in a usually safe residential district of Algiers. She was shot twice in the head by two youths on the way to her school.

Algeria's ambassador has returned to Paris after being recalled in an angry reaction to President Francois Mitterrand's proposal for a European conference on the bloody conflict in the country.

The move, reported by Algeria's official news agency APS on Sunday and backed by diplomatic moves in Algiers, appeared to signal an end to the row between Algeria and its former colonial ruler, France.

APS said Ambassador Hocine Djoudi returned on Saturday to Paris. He was recalled the previous week after Mr. Mitterrand floated the idea of a European Union (EU) meeting to seek a solution to the conflict pitting Algeria's authorities against armed Muslim fundamentalists.

Algeria, proud of its independence, has called Mr. Mitterrand's idea "interference" motivated by "personal hatred."

Khartoum seen wooing Mahdi

KHARTOUM (R) — Former Prime Minister Sadeq Al Mahdi is reemerging into Sudan's political limelight with the full blessing of the Islamist government which toppled him, proscribed his party, and put him under house arrest.

The latest public appearance of Oxford-educated Mahdi, Sudan's last democratically elected prime minister, was to address a large group of students at Khartoum University on Saturday night who support the Islamic government.

The government-owned Al Sudan Al Hadith newspaper, which not long ago was scornful of Dr. Mahdi, on Sunday hailed him as an Islamic thinker.

Sudan's Parliament Speaker Mohammed Al-Amin Khalifa, a pillar of the Islamist government, met Dr. Mahdi and last week discussed the prospect of "a national accord" with him.

Dr. Mahdi, 58, led the huge country from 1986 to 1989 as prime minister of a multi-party parliamentary democracy.

The army, backed by the National Islamic Front, toppled him in a coup. The new Islamic government abolished political parties, implemented Islamic law and clashed with Western states that befriended Sudan in the 1970s and 1980s.

The United States in 1993 put Sudan on a list of states which it charges with supporting "terrorism," and Khartoum has vigorously fought its 11-year-old civil war against southern rebels that has killed over a million people.

Dr. Mahdi has been detained at least five times under the government of President Omar Hassan Al Bashir. In June last year, security forces interrogated him for two weeks, linking him to an alleged coup plot.

Al Sudan Al Hadith said Dr. Mahdi called in his address for an open dialogue to work on a successful "Islamic project." Dr. Mahdi, like most of Sudan's northern opposition, supports Islamic law in principle but differs with General Bashir over how to implement it.

But political observers say the government's real agenda is to get Dr. Mahdi to participate, or at least support, a coming series of elections designed to cement the new political order.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Saddam wants Libya to probe PoW issue

TRIPOLI (AFP) — Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has asked Libya to send an investigative team to Iraq to prove his claim that no Kuwaiti prisoners of war are being held, the Libyan agency JANA reported Sunday. Iraqi Labour Minister Latif Nassif Jassem passed on the request to Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi whom he met here Saturday. JANA added, "Iraq asks Libya, along with any other party, to carry out direct research in all regions of Iraq so it makes sure that... there are no Kuwaiti prisoners," the message said, quoted by JANA. Kuwait accuses Iraq of detaining 609 prisoners arrested during the August 1990-February 1991 occupation of the emirate. The Iraqi message said "it is not in the interest of Iraq to hold any Kuwaiti prisoner."

Nateq Nuri slams Gingrich as 'imbecile'

TEHRAN (AFP) — Parliament Speaker Ali Akbar Nateq Nuri on Sunday blasted his U.S. counterpart Newt Gingrich as an "imbecile" for calling for the overthrow of Iranian government. "One ought not to be so stupid and lacking in intelligence to threaten a nation on the anniversary of its revolution," Mr. Nateq Nuri said of the speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives. "I feel sorry for the American people for having such imbeciles ruling them," he said in a speech in parliament to mark the 16th anniversary of Islamic revolution and broadcast by Iranian radio. Mr. Gingrich said Friday that the United States should focus its post-cold war security concerns on "terrorism, particularly Islamic regimes such as Iran's. I can not overstate the potential dangers that Iran represents." Mr. Gingrich said.

Rabin's wife raises a 'stink'

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's wife Leah raised a storm in Israel on Sunday after saying the leader of the opposition "stinks." She accused Israeli television reporter Dan Shilon of helping "stinking Benjamin Netanyahu to win power," the Maariv newspaper reported. Despite denying the charge, Mr. Rabin's wife failed to convince the right-wing Likud party and Mr. Shilon was happy to confirm the smear. Likud Deputy Yehoshua Matza demanded an emergency meeting of parliament to condemn "this untimely intrusion into politics by the prime minister's wife." Another Likud Deputy Ron Nachman, urged Leah Rabin to listen to the wives of Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and President Ezer Weizman. "They know how to be discreet," Mr. Nachman said.

Israel jails WTN cameraman

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Police have arrested a Palestinian cameraman for a Western television agency on suspicion of inciting Palestinian youths to throw stones so he could photograph them, an official said Sunday. Abdul Karim Khabeisa, of Worldwide Television News (WTN), was arrested Saturday in a central plaza of the West Bank town of Nablus, police said. Police planned to charge Khabeisa within the next week for "inciting children to throw stones so he could photograph them." Chris Slaney, bureau chief for WTN, denied the allegations. Mr. Slaney said he was trying to win Mr. Khabeisa's release although police had told him they would hold him until trial.

Israel, PLO plan industrial zones

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israel has held talks with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) aimed at building industrial zones along their borders, officials said here Sunday. "We have been working for several months on this idea," Israel's Minister of Industry and Trade Mishal Harish told a press conference. "We must coordinate our positions with those of the Palestinians and determine areas where we can set up these zones on each side of the border" between Israel and the Palestinian areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Harish and the economy minister of the self-rule authority, Ahmad Qouneia, discussed the plan during a meeting in Jerusalem. Israeli Radio said these industrial zones — whose construction could be financed by the United States, Europe and Japan — would provide work for Palestinians while preventing them from entering deep into Israel.